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A NEW STAGE IN JEWISH-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

Michael Wyschogrod

NEO-NAZISM — A GLOBAL TREND?

Jack Nusan Porter

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JUDAISM, conceived as a free and non-partisan organ, is dedicated to the creative discussion and exposition of the religious, moral and philosophical concepts of Judaism and their relevance to the problems of modern society. Through an exploration of the meaning and needs of the Jewish experience, it hopes to widen the channels of communication among Jews and to affirm Jewish verity and vitality to the world at large.

Views and opinions expressed in the articles and reviews are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Editors or the American Jewish Congress.

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JUDAISM

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In increasing measure, modern men are turning again to the quest for a worldview on the issues that are timeless—the meaning of life, the challenge of death, the purpose of suffering, the significance of the individual, his relation to society, and the goal of history. In order to advance this enterprise of spiritual discovery of our time this Journal has been projected. It will be primarily concerned with the philosophy, ethics, and religion of Judaism as a factor in the contemporary world . . .

We are committed to the proposition that Judaism has positive value today for Jews and for the world . . . At the same time, we disassociate ourselves from the dangerous tendency toward the hardening of party lines on the contemporary Jewish scene . . . The members of the Board of Editors belong to every school of Jewish life or to none. The trends popularly referred to as Orthodox, Conservatism, Reform, Reconstructionism, as well as others that as yet have no specific names, have their advocates among us, though no institution or movement is officially represented . . . Undoubtedly, our differences will find expression in these pages, but we shall be at one in opposing the dogmatism which takes for granted that one's own particular standpoint has a monopoly on truth and the authoritarianism which would suppress any contrary point of view.

Judaism will be dedicated to the quest for truth in the spirit of freedom. Our columns will be open to anyone who has something significant to say and the ability to say it well. New and unconventional interpretations, whatever their standpoint, will be welcomed from every source, for we share the conviction of the Talmud that "Both these and the others are the words of the living God." *From the introductory article by Robert Gordis, "Toward a Renaissance of Judaism" in Vol. I, No. 1.*

The First Reader

Happy Birthday To Us

Last November the Thirtieth Anniversary of our journal was marked by an all-day Conference, conducted at the Hebrew Union College Institute of Religion. The theme of the Conference was: "Is There/Can There Be An American Jewish Culture?" The morning session was devoted to a consideration of the possibilities of Jewish culture in America. The two speakers were Professors Harold Bloom of Yale University and Robert Alter of the University of California in Los Angeles.

The Luncheon Session took the form of a testimonial to the Editor of JUDAISM. Dr. Jonathan Sarna read a tribute to Dr. Robert Gordis from Dr. Alfred Gottschalk, President of the Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion, extolling the contribution of JUDAISM to the quality of Jewish life in America. Mr. Henry Siegman, the Executive Vice President of the American Jewish Congress, which has sponsored the publication of JUDAISM for three decades, delivered a message of tribute to Dr. Gordis as the guest of honor.

In his response, the Editor expressed his appreciation to Congress for making possible the uninterrupted publication of the quarterly and thanked the large and representative gathering who were in attendance at the Conference.

The afternoon session was highlighted by an address by Professor David Sidorsky of Columbia University, followed by three responses from the editors of the three rabbinical journals now appearing, Dr. Samuel E. Karff, editor of *Reform Judaism*; Rabbi Harold S. Kushner, editor of *Conservative Judaism*, and Rabbi Walter S. Wurzburger, editor of *Tradition*. They expressed their reactions to the Sidorsky paper and set forth their own assessment of the future of Judaism in America.

The papers, together with a report on the Conference, prepared by our Managing Editor, Dr. Ruth B. Waxman, appear in this issue.

Tel Aviv Is Not What It Used To Be

The largest city in Israel — and in the view of many, the liveliest — is Tel Aviv. *Mordecai Roshwald*, who has been a frequent visitor to it, gives his impressions of the changes in this metropolis in his paper, "Tel Aviv: Then and Now."

We Need Eternal Vigilance

Reinhold Niebuhr has been credited with the statement that the function of religion is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. Strictly speaking, *Jack Nusan Porter's* paper "Neo-Nazism, Neo-Fascism, and Terrorism: A Global Trend?" does not have religion as its theme, but it will surely disturb those who are at ease in Zion. The author offers a concise and factual survey of the entire spectrum of extremism, both right and left, in all its varieties — respectable, intellectualist and terrorist. He also deals with the underlying factors that make for the growth of terrorism, conditions which are all too prevalent today. Having presented a diagnosis of the malady, he proceeds to offer, in general terms at least, the elements of healing, so that democracy may endure.

Three Jews and a Non-Jew

Being a non-Jew, William Styron obviously differs from the group of contemporary American Jewish writers, Bernard Malamud, Saul Bellow and Philip Roth. Styron has nevertheless been drawn to the creation of American-Jewish fictional characters in his novels. He is perhaps the only significant non-Jewish writer who has made the Holocaust a basic feature of his work. While according to it the tragic centrality it possesses for the Jew, he underscores its impact on non-Jews through the character of his heroine in *Sophie's Choice*.

In his paper, "Malamud, Roth, and Styron: Or One Jewish Writer's Response," *Irving Saposnik* presents his view of the dominant traits of these three Jewish writers, as well as the implications of Styron's preoccupation with Jewish themes. He suggests that Styron may be predicting that the current efflorescence of American-Jewish fiction today is temporary and will soon pass away. Whether or not this is Styron's intention and whether or not the prophecy will be fulfilled, the analysis of the four writers in question will interest anyone concerned with American Jewish culture and American literature today.

Judaism Can Prepare You For Death

In recent years a great deal of interest has been manifest in death and how it is to be confronted, both by the living and the dying. Indeed, a new discipline has appeared calling itself thanatology.

Judaism has always regarded itself with pride as *Torat Hayyim* "a religion of life." By that same token, however, it could not ignore the one inevitable human experience. There are rich insights in the Jewish tradition which can be helpful in this regard. *Moses Halevi Spero* presents them in his paper entitled "Reflections on the Inevitability of Death: A Jewish Existential Approach."

"I" and "Thou" Need a Prior Third Partner

William Abrams is an enthusiastic devotee of Martin Buber's "I-Thou" philosophy. In his paper, "The Eternal Triangle," he contends, however, that the widespread impact of Buber's thought on modern men and women is due, not so much to its intrinsic value as to the misappropriation of his basic insight by his secularist contemporaries. Buber's emphasis on love as the essence of relationship between God and man was wrenched from its theological mooring and was interpreted exclusively in psychological terms as referring to the relationship between human beings, with God being totally ignored in the process.

Abrams argues that, properly understood, the Buberian paradigm is a triangle, in which God and two human beings are involved, or more precisely, that the God-man encounter must precede the man-man relationship.

Excellent as the paper is, the Editor is constrained to raise, however briefly, some basic questions. The author treats "rationalism" and "humanism" as being at the opposite pole from "religion." Anyone at home in the full richness of the Jewish tradition may well question so simplistic a dichotomy.

In his paper Abrams concedes that "non-religious" people often lead highly ethical lives. There is also a related question which has been discussed in the pages of JUDAISM more than once, by contributors wholeheartedly committed to religion. Why do "religious" people often display ethical standards far lower than their "secular" counterparts? These demurrs aside, "The Eternal Triangle" will undoubtedly prove very stimulating to our readers.

Steps in the Right Direction

For two thousand years the Jewish people, particularly in Europe, has been exposed to persecution, expulsion and massacre, culminating in the unspeakable horrors of the Holocaust in our own day. In no slight degree, this hostility was fueled by the Christian church. However, in 1965, a Papal bull, *Nostra Aetate*, was issued by the Vatican, setting forth a new and more positive attitude toward Jews and Judaism, though not without a number of reservations and limitations.

It was not to be expected that one Papal pronouncement would

totally wipe out, or even significantly modify, an attitude that had been preached and taught for millennia. Nevertheless, the last decade and a half have witnessed a far greater measure of understanding and cooperation on all levels between the two faith-communities. This has been particularly true in the United States, where individual personal relations between Catholics and Jews have, with few exceptions, generally been excellent.

In addition, a more fundamental rethinking of Catholic attitudes towards Jews, Judaism and the State of Israel has been needed. Two such fundamental works by European scholars, Clemens Thoma and Franz Mussner, have recently appeared. In his review-essay, "A New Stage in Jewish-Christian Dialogue," *Michael Wyschogrod* hails the appearance of these two important books and analyzes their significance. They present a remarkable appreciation by Catholics of the value and vitality of Judaism in the centuries after Jesus, where previously the conventional Christian view regarded Judaism as lifeless, "legalistic" and superfluous.

It should be pointed out that, in the course of his detailed, in-depth discussion of the theological issues involved, Wyschogrod sets forth his own position on two important subjects that are highly individualistic. He denies the all-but-universal view that Paul believed that the Torah, which he called "the Law," had been rendered obsolete by the salvific figure of Jesus, the Christ, who had come to redeem mankind from original sin. Wyschogrod argues that Paul's polemics against "the Law" and such basic Jewish observance as circumcision were intended only for would-be Gentile converts to the new faith.

The second view proposed by Wyschogrod is at least equally controversial. He maintains that Judaism does not deny the possibility of an Incarnation; it merely does not believe that it happened in the case of Jesus. To be sure, these two positions would narrow the gap between Judaism and Christianity, and Wyschogrod may be right. The Editor does not think so, but he is happy to open the floor for discussion. Our readers will, I am sure, find the entire essay stimulating and enlightening.

From the Editorial Desk

And now a few words on behalf of the editor's craft. The Book of Proverbs counsels us, "Let a stranger praise you and not your own mouth." On the other hand, a Talmudic maxim declares that where a person is not recognized, he is permitted to describe his achievements.

By its very nature, the work of an editor is largely anonymous and never comes to the attention of the readers.

Writing in the *Association for Jewish Studies Newsletter*, Professor Arnold J. Band, its editor, comments as follows: "Those of us who have assumed editorial responsibilities know what has been submitted and

what was actually published. Were we to tell what we know, many scholarly reputations would be somewhat different from what they are now. . . . Few of our readers can imagine the talent and energy invested in the editing or the loneliness, the sense every editor harbors that no one out there knows what goes into each page."

In our own work, we have been heartened and pleased by the frequency with which our contributors, as well as our readers, express their appreciation for the creative and critical input that the Editors invest in JUDAISM. It is this contribution which our journal makes to the quality and content of Jewish life in our times which constitutes our basic reward.

R.G.

The Thirtieth Birthday of JUDAISM

RUTH B. WAXMAN

HOW DO YOU CELEBRATE A THIRTIETH BIRTH day? Not long ago one would have ignored it because no one over that age was to be trusted. Fortunately, the world has progressed beyond that cliché and, what is more, the moving figures at AJCongress recognised that here was another occasion for extending the Jewish cultural contribution that JUDAISM has been making since its inception.

But how? When the journal was twenty years old we put out a Cumulative Index, by subject matter — with cross-references — and by author, both for the articles as well as for the books reviewed. The Index has proved to be a valuable research tool for scholars, students and general readers.

For the twenty-fifty anniversary the issue came out in an appropriately silver cover and there was a luncheon in honor of Dr. Gordis. He was commended for the exemplary quality of the journal under his editorship since 1969 and for his vital contribution to it as a founder in 1952 and as a guiding influence over a number of years thereafter. (The history of the early years appears in an article, "The Genesis of JUDAISM," by Dr. Gordis in the Fall 1981 issue.) For the thirtieth anniversary there was the suggestion that we bring the Index up to date (a very valuable notion and one that we hope to implement as soon as funds can be made available). There was also the suggestion that we put out a volume of "The Best of JUDAISM," an equally good idea and one which may yet be realised.

The format that was finally agreed upon for the thirtieth anniversary was an all-day Conference on *Jewish Culture in America*, a cause which, we immodestly feel, our journal has helped to further. There were two major sessions; the morning was devoted to the topic of "Is There/Can There Be a Jewish Culture in America?" and the afternoon to "The American Experience and Religious Denominationalism."

Between these two there was a Testimonial Luncheon to the Editor. The Conference was held on Sunday, Nov. 22, 1981, in the building of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, whose facilities were made available through the generosity of the President, Dr. Alfred Gottschalk. For that cordial gesture of hospitality we are very grateful. The Conference was very well attended and was certainly an intellectual success.

The two speakers for the morning came from opposite sides of the American continent: Professor Harold Bloom from Yale in New Haven and Professor Robert Alter from the University of California at Berkeley,

both outstanding scholars and literary critics. Bloom presented "A Speculation Upon American Jewish Culture," while Alter spoke on "The Jew Who Didn't Get Away: On the Possibility of an American Jewish Culture." The session was chaired by Phil Baum, Associate Executive Director of AJCongress who also conducted the discussion from the floor.

At the ensuing luncheon, Henry Siegman, Executive Director of AJCongress spoke and introduced Dr. Jonathan Sarna, who brought greetings from Dr. Gottschalk. Mr. Siegman then presented a plaque to Dr. Gordis as guest of honor. Since this is a mechanical age we are not always in complete control of what happens. The tape machine malfunctioned at the luncheon so, ironically, we do not have the complete statement by Dr. Gordis.

The afternoon session was organized somewhat differently from the morning one. David Sidorsky, Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University spoke on the theme, "The American Experience and Religious Denominationalism." We regret that his paper was not available for publication. Following his presentation, three responses were delivered by Rabbi Samuel E. Karff, Rabbi Harold S. Kushner and Rabbi Walter S. Wurzbarger, editors of the respective journals of the Reform, Conservative and Orthodox movements. The chairman of the afternoon was Michael Wyschogrod, Professor of Philosophy at Baruch College, CUNY.

We offer here the proceedings of the Conference for our readers' enlightenment and enjoyment.

A Speculation Upon American Jewish Culture

HAROLD BLOOM

"AMERICAN JEWISH CULTURE," CONSIDERED merely as a phrase, is as problematic, say, as "Freudian Literary Criticism," which I recall once comparing to the Holy Roman Empire: not holy, not Roman, not an empire; not Freudian, not literary, not criticism. Much that is herded together under the rubric of American Jewish Culture is not American, not Jewish, not culture. Here I will take these terms backwards, starting with "culture," which began as a Roman concept, became European, has not quite yet become American, and never could be Jewish, if by Jewish we mean anything religious at all, since culture is a stubbornly secular concept. Whether we know what we mean by "Jewish" is so problematic that I will begin on "culture" with one of our enemies, since our enemies have known well enough what they meant. I will quote an eminent speculator upon culture, the anti-Semite Carl Gustav Jung. Of course, his followers and apologists go on denying his viciousness, but I will let him speak for himself, in an essay of 1934:

... The Jew as a relative nomad has never created, and presumably will never create, a cultural form of his own, for all his instincts and talents are dependent on a more or less civilized lost people . . .

By "cultural," Jung would appear to have meant his divinely creative Collective Unconscious, very fecund in Aryans, but lacking in Freudians, who, to Jung, were identical with all Jews. Culture, in some of its Germanic overtones, rightly makes us a touch nervous, in consequence, when it is applied to Jewish matters. Yet we hardly can resign the term to the conceptual contexts of anthropologists and sociologists. We *were* a text-centered people, perhaps as much as any people ever has been. If we still *are* a people, it can be only because we have some texts in common. Culture, in our context, broadly must mean literary culture, if by "literary" one means Biblical and post-Biblical *written* tradition. Even our oral tradition was more text-oriented than not, since it, too, was commentary upon the ultimate book.

Culture, in the sense expounded by the Matthew Arnold-Lionel Trilling tradition, is essentially the culture of the highly literate, an elite class whose ideology is determined by a relationship between text and society, rather than between folkways and society. Whether that sense of culture still prevails is clearly dubious. Deep reading is a vanished phe-

HAROLD BLOOM *is professor of Humanities at Yale University.*

nomenon, practiced now only at selected academies, where already it shows tokens of decline. In some large sense, such reading was one of the residues of Platonic tradition, since even the Hebraic emphasis upon study as salvation was a Platonic importation, though we are uneasy at acknowledging this. But I don't want to repeat here my melancholy prophecy in regard to the cultural prospects of American Jewry, uttered in Jerusalem a few years ago. Rather than speculate upon the probable further decline of American Jewish culture, I prefer here to ask whether there ever *could* have been such a culture anyway, in the literary or Arnoldian sense of culture. What is truly problematic in the question has little to do with definitions of culture, and everything to do with the difficult definition of being American, and the impossible definition of being Jewish. "Culture" is a nagging term, however, even in its essentially literary sense, whether we seek its meaning in Arnold and Trilling, or in T.S. Eliot, or in a Marxist critic like Raymond Williams. So, before abandoning it here, I want to start with its origins, particularly as set forth by Hannah Arendt, whose troubled reflections upon being Jewish I will glance at somewhat later.

Arendt wrote an essay on the social and political significance of "The Crisis in Culture," first published in 1960, and still available in what I believe to be her most useful book, *Between Past and Future*. She gives there a true starting-point for our inquiry:

Culture, word and concept, is Roman in origin. The word "culture" derives from *culere* — to cultivate, to dwell, to take care, to tend and preserve — and it relates primarily to the intercourse of man with nature in the sense of cultivating and tending nature until it becomes fit for human habitation

... The Greeks did not know what culture is because they did not cultivate nature but rather tore from the womb of the earth . . . [C]losely connected with this was that the great Roman reverence for the testimony of the past as such, to which we owe not merely the preservation of the Greek heritage but the very continuity of our tradition, was quite alien to them . . .

Arendt stresses the agricultural metaphor of loving care for the earth, which, by extension, became loving care for the testimony of tradition. In Matthew Arnold, these Roman concepts were broadened and modernized into the most famous of all definitions of culture: "being a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know on all matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world." T.S. Eliot's revision of Arnold, in a less than generous work called *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, emphasized the conflict between culture and equalitarianism. Lionel Trilling, rather than Eliot, became the true heir of Arnold by compounding Arnold with Freud:

... To make a coherent life, to confront the terrors of the outer and inner world, to establish the ritual and art, the pieties and duties which make possible the life of the group and the individual — these are culture . . .

... This intense conviction of the existence of the self apart from

culture is, as culture well knows, its noblest and most generous achievement . . . We can speak no greater praise of Freud than to say that he placed this idea at the very center of his thought.

We are left then, by Trilling, with what has become the Freudian or normative notion of culture in American intellectual society. The self stands within, yet beyond, culture, culture being that ideology which helps produce such a self: coherent, capable of standing apart, yet dutiful and pious towards the force of the best which has been thought and said in the past. This noble idealization has become a shibboleth of what the academy regards as its humanism, but it is already sadly dated and, truly, it does seem to me far more Arnoldian than Freudian. Not that our high culture is less literary than it used to be; quite the contrary, as a darker view of Freud and culture might show us. Freud thought that the prime intellectual enemy of psychoanalysis was religion, with philosophy a kind of poor third in the contest, and literature too harmless to compete. We see now that Freud fought shadows; religion and philosophy alike no longer inform our culture, and psychoanalysis, merged with our culture, has been revealed as another branch of literature. The ideology of the Western world, whether sounded forth within or beyond the universities, depends upon a literary culture, which explains why teachers of literature, more than those of history or philosophy or politics, have become the secular clergy or clerisy of the West. A culture becomes literary when its conceptual modes have failed it, and when its folkways have been homogenized into a compost heap of ocular junk, for us nightly visible upon our television screens.

I think that this is the somber context in which the supposed achievement of any American Jewish culture has to be examined. Such an examination requires touchstones, and there seem to me two prime candidates for greatness in modern Jewish cultural achievement: Freud and Kafka. But what is Jewish about the work of Freud and Kafka, rather than Austrian German or Czech German, respectively? Vienna and Prague are neither of them Jerusalem, and Freud and Kafka were not traditional or religious Jews, in any way crucially indebted to our normative tradition. I grant the apparent absurdity of touchstones for Jewish culture whose own Jewish culture was essentially so peripheral, but American Jewish culture is at least as much an oxymoronic phrase as German Jewish culture was, and without the conscious use of paradox there is no way into the dilemmas of my subject. If American Jewish identity is a cultural puzzle, and it is, why then let us acknowledge also that all Jewish identity in the Diaspora is a permanent enigma. But I want now to go against traditional practice, and against all current Israeli polemic, by multiplying the enigma. There are three areas of Jewish identity today: Israel, the Diaspora, and the United States. I doubt that Israel, in its Westernized cultural and, so, non-normative Jewish aspects, is in much more continuity with Diaspora traditions than we are. As for our identity, well, where shall I begin, how

could I ever end? However we seem, from the perspective of Jerusalem, we know that we are not in Exile. I am aware that many German Jews had deluded themselves into a similar knowledge, but American Jewry is unlike any previous Jewry in supposed Exile, with the single possible exception being the Hellenized Jewry of Alexandria, from roughly the third century before the Common Era until the third century after. But everything that is problematic about our identity is capable of sustaining some illumination from my touchstones, so I return to Freud and to Kafka. Why do we think of their cultural achievement as having been Jewish, and what about these idiosyncratic spirits *was* incontrovertibly Jewish?

Peter Gay, in his book, *Freud, Jews, and Other Germans*, has preceded me by arguing the opposite. His Freud is culturally a German, not a Jew, who "offered the world but German wisdom." Gay is one of the most distinguished of cultural historians, but I read and teach Freud constantly, and I do not acknowledge that I read and teach "German wisdom." Every close reader of Freud learns that "they" are the Gentiles and "we" are the Jews. Freud perhaps came to trust a handful of Gentiles, of whom Ernest Jones was foremost, but I can think of no other modern Jewish intellectual so remorseless in dividing off, socially and spiritually, Jews from Gentiles, and so rigorous in choosing only his own people as companions. Kafka, who had a far gentler spirit, also chose Jews as his ambience. I do not think that I am citing a sociological element, an instance of defensive clannishness, or the simple reversal of Kafka's famous outburst in his 1914 diary: "What have I in common with Jews? I have hardly anything in common with myself and should stand very quietly in a corner, content that I can breathe." Seven years later, Kafka phrased this rather differently:

In any case we Jews are not painters. We cannot depict things statically. We see them always in transition, in movement, in change. We are story-tellers . . . A story-teller cannot talk about story-telling. He tells stories or is silent. That is all. His world begins to vibrate within him, or it sinks into silence. My world is dying away. I am burned out.

The *locus classicus* of meditations upon what is Jewish in Kafka can be found in Robert Alter's *After the Tradition* where Alter confronts two antithetical truths. First: "No other Jew who has contributed so significantly to European literature appears so intensely, perhaps disturbingly, Jewish in the quality of his imagination as Kafka." But, second: "Kafka . . . addressed himself to the broadest questions of human nature and spiritual existence, working with images, actions, and situations that were by design universal in character . . ." Following Alter, I acknowledge the paradox and the mystery of Kafkan Jewishness as against Kafkan universality. But I have a curious suggestion as to the center of this Kafkan antithesis, and I quote the following Kafkan parable as proof-text:

He is thirsty, and is cut off from a spring by a mere clump of bushes. But he

is divided against himself: one part overlooks the whole, sees that he is standing here and that the spring is just beside him; but another part notices nothing, has at most a divination that the first part sees all. But as he notices nothing he cannot drink.

Is this a Jewish parable? It is called *The Spring* by its translator, which necessarily loses the German language overtone of "source" or "origin" that also is involved in the word "*Quelle*." I will assert that even if this wasn't a Jewish parable *when* Kafka wrote it, it certainly is one now, precisely *because* Kafka wrote it. In that assertion I am suggesting that Kafka, in at least some ways, was a strong enough writer to modify or change our prior notions of just what being Jewish meant. Since Freud, *in toto*, is an even stronger writer than Kafka, I thus assert that Freud's Jewishness, whatever it was or wasn't in relation to tradition, even more strongly now alters our notions of Jewish identity. I would like not to be too weakly misunderstood on this rather subtle point, and so I will labor it for a space.

All origins or sources are arbitrary, yet if sufficient continuities issue forth from them, we learn to regard their teleologies as being inescapable. I once wrote something like that and added that we knew this truth best from what we so oxymoronically called our love lives. I would think now that this difficult notion of the brute facticity of tradition is best known by meditating upon the indescribable history of the Jews. The continuities of that history are its scandal, and constitute the fine absurdity of this occasion. I stand here, just past fifty years in age, and worry out loud about the problematics of my identity, an identity inescapably determined for me by a continuity of ancestors stretched past at least thirty five hundred years, or seventy times my age. Jewish mothers have given birth to Jewish daughters and sons for perhaps one hundred and fifty generations, a facticity so overwhelming as to dwarf every conceptualization as to what Jewish identity might mean, *unless* it is to mean precisely what the Talmud wanted it to mean.

The authority of so immense and so somber a history must compel awe and at least some recognition in every sensitive consciousness exposed to that tradition. This awe tends to obscure a curious truth about Jewish identity, or perhaps of any people's identity; always changing, such identity conceals its changes under the masks of the normative. The authority of identity is not constancy-in-change, but the *originality* that usurps tradition and becomes a fresh authority, strangely in the name of continuity. Freud and Kafka already have usurped much of the image of Jewishness, by which I mean precisely the cultural image. A Western secular intellectual, searching for the elitist image of Jewishness, these days is likelier to come up with the names of Freud or Kafka or even Gershom Scholem than with those of Maimonides or Rashi or Moses Mendelssohn. Originality in this usurping and elitist sense includes the notion of profound difficulty. Whoever J was, J here meaning the Yahwist or first crucial author of the Torah, J was more idiosyncratic and difficult to interpret

even than Freud or Kafka. Indeed, he still is, perhaps more than ever. It may have been quite arbitrary that nearly every other Biblical writer took J as his point of origin. Once this had happened, J ceased to be arbitrary, and our relation to his work has been governed ever since by an inescapable contingency, however normative tradition may have misread it. We are imprisoned by a factuality that interpretations of J have imposed upon us, just as we are imprisoned by a Freudian factuality as well. In a high cultural sense, the Freudian images, and to a lesser extent the Kafkan ones, have invaded, and by now contaminated, the composite image of Jewish identity, at least for elitists. So the issue is no longer whether Freud or Kafka represent Jewish achievement. They have *become* Jewish high culture, in the sense that a writer like Philip Roth can only resort to them as icons when he seeks images of that culture.

If my admittedly curious argument is at all suggestive, then it is simple enough to say why we do not yet have an American Jewish culture. Our writers and speculators just have not been original enough until now, and probably will not be for some time to come. Freud and Kafka came late in German language Jewish culture. There had been Heine, of course, long before, and American Jewish culture, alas, has not produced any Heine either. We have some good novelists of the second rank; there is no Faulkner among them, let alone a Hawthorne or Melville or Henry James. We have a few good poets, still young enough to undergo interesting development, but they do not include a Wallace Stevens or Hart Crane, let alone a Whitman or a Dickinson. We have various speculators, scholars and critics, but none among us will turn out to have been an Emerson. The absence of overwhelming cultural achievement compels us to rely upon the cultural identity of the past phases of *Galut*, yet we, as I have said before, scarcely feel that we are in exile.

Kafka, in a letter to Max Brod, wrote that the despair over the Jewish question was the inspiration of the German Jewish writers, and he remarked that this was "an inspiration as respectable as any other but fraught . . . with distressing peculiarities." These peculiarities stemmed from the hideous distress that *their* problem was not a German one. We don't have despair over the Jewish question; it isn't even clear that there is a Jewish question in the United States. America, like Hellenistic Alexandria and unlike Germany, is an eclectic culture, of which we are a part. The Jewish writer's problem here and now does not differ from the Hellenistic or American *belatedness*, from the anxiety that we may all of us just be too late. Cultural belatedness makes the American literary culture problematic precisely as is American Jewish culture; this problem, ours, is truly American. I think that is why Nathanael West, who was something of a Jewish anti-Semite, is still the most powerful writer that American Jewry has produced. His masterwork, *Miss Lonelyhearts*, marvelously re-writes Milton's *Paradise Regained* in American terms, though also in terms curiously less Jewish than Milton's own. West, like Heine, may have arrived a

touch too soon. A deeper awareness that American culture and Jewish culture in America could not differ much might have saved West some self-hatred yet might also have weakened him as a writer.

No one now can prophesy the appearance of cultural genius, because we do have an oppressive sense of belatedness. I want, therefore, to turn the rest of this speculation not to a messianic longing for an American Freud or Kafka, but to the other paradox, which is the pragmatic ending in this country of the trope or myth of *Galut* which remains essential evidently to, and for, Israeli culture. I recall vividly from a Jerusalem dialogue of a few years ago the troubled and hyperbolic eloquence of the Israeli writer, A.B. Yehoshua, proclaiming his conviction that Israel had to break off relations with American Jewry in order to compel the saving remnant of that Jewry to forsake Exile and return geographically and nationally to Zion. My memories have been stirred anew by reading the novelist's just-translated polemic, *Between Right and Right*. Yehoshua is passionately sincere, but he is so far from American Jewish realities as to sound more ironic than he intended to be. He seems to offer only three alternatives: assimilate completely and thus forsake Jewish identity; perish in another Holocaust; live in Israel. All of us here reject the first two, and almost all of us reject the third as well. Yehoshua's logic is appalling: *Galut* caused the Holocaust and will cause it again. The Jew, therefore, must become either a Gentile, or a corpse, or an Israeli.

Yet I would praise Yehoshua for provoking us, because such provocation leads back to the central question of American Jewish culture. What is the identity of the secular American Jew? The question returns us to what always has been most problematic about us: a religion that became a people, rather than a people that became a religion. The religion of Akiba is not dead in America, Israel, and elsewhere, but it no longer dominates the lives of the majority among us here, Israel, wherever. And since we also are no longer a text-obsessed people, whether in America or Israel or anywhere, we are in truer danger of vanishing from lack of real literacy than from lack of religion or lack of defense against another Holocaust. If we lose our identity it will be because, as I have warned elsewhere, there is no longer a textual difference between ourselves and the Gentiles.

To ask just what a textual difference can be is to confront the truest question of Jewish cultural identity. The difference is not so much in a choice of texts, our Bible and Talmud against their Old Testament and New Testament structure, as it is in the relationship of a people to a text or texts. I go back to my earlier formulation; we were a religion become a people, and not a people become a religion. The parodies of our process are all American, the most successful in contemporary terms being the Mormons, very much now a religion become a people. But, of course, the Yankees of New England, once a religion, are now a people also. Except for the Fundamentalists, this has been the American Protestant pattern, and so Jews, Quakers, Congregationalists, and doubtless someday Mor-

mons, truly melt together. The authentic American majority is not Moral but whatever you want to call the peoplehood that survives a religious origin.

The cultural consequences of this analogy between Jews without Judaism and Protestants without Christianity are larger than any mode of study that has yet been chronicled. But, at the least, Jews have become no more in Exile than Quakers are, or Calvinists of all varieties. If we are survivors of an Electron Theology, why then so are they. A contemporary Jewish poet tends to have the same untroubled relationship, or lack of relationship, to Judaism that Walt Whitman had to the Hicksite Quakerism of his boyhood. And, for similar reasons, poets as varied as Philip Levine, John Hollander, and Irving Feldman are no more in Exile in America than are say John Ashberry, James Merrill, and A.R. Ammons. The old formulae of *Galut* simply do not work in the diffuse cultural contexts of America.

I want now to draw together the two paradoxical arguments I have been exploring. When we speak of the relative failure of an American Jewish culture, what we mean pragmatically is our lack of strong figures like Freud and Kafka, because *their* achievement has now redefined Jewish culture, even though we could hardly say what was Jewish about them if we approached them apart from the facticity or contingency that they have imposed upon us. That is to say, *they are Jewish cultural figures only when they are viewed retrospectively*. But now we come to the second paradox; they define for us the final Jewish cultural achievement of the *Galut*, yet we are not in Exile. They were cultural summits of a people, once a religion, in a hostile context. We are a people, once a religion, in a diffuse context, in which hostility is less prevalent than is a variety of diffusenesses parallel to our own. What is culturally problematic about ourselves as a people is precisely what is culturally problematic about the other peoples of the American elite and establishment. But this, too, will only be seen clearly when it will be seen retrospectively.

Whatever the future American Jewish cultural achievement will be, it will become Jewish only *after* it has imposed itself as achievement. And because it will not bear the stigmata of *Galut*, it will be doubly hard for us to recognize it as Jewish, even after it has imposed itself. But by then it will be very difficult for us to recognize ourselves as Jewish anyway, unless an achievement will be there that revises us even as it imposes itself upon us.

The Jew Who Didn't Get Away: On the Possibility of an American Jewish Culture

ROBERT ALTER

IS THERE AN AMERICAN JEWISH CULTURE?

The question is nearly imponderable because each of its component terms is so clearly problematic. Let us assume, however daunting the assumption may be, that for this issue culture means high culture rather than the sort of collective behavior studied by the ethnographer (say, Maimonides and the Vilna Gaon rather than bagels and lox); that Jewish implies a relation of authentic continuity with the Jewish past; and that American means distinctively American. Having defined the question in this uncompromising manner, we can readily see that only the last term can be taken with any assurance as an accomplished fact, for there has been no other major Diaspora community in which the Jews have been so completely integrated into the life of the country, where they have felt so much at home and, therefore, so natural about making the local cultural idiom their own. But the attainment of distinctive American identity is, of course, precisely what casts doubt on the realization of the Jewish component of our question.

The quandary of a possible Jewish culture in this country is felt most acutely as a linguistic problem, though it is certainly not exhausted by considerations of language. Kafka, contemplating the partly analogous phenomenon of German Jewish writing, stated the matter with characteristic trenchancy in a remarkable letter to Max Brod written in June, 1921. The German Jewish writer, he proposed, was inexorably confronted with three impossibilities: "The impossibility of not writing, the impossibility of writing German, the impossibility of writing differently." Some American Jewish writers have been locked into just this three-sided dilemma (and, in what follows, I shall concentrate on prose fiction, where the use of the language is implicated in the representation of social milieu), though it must also be said that for a good many others the dilemma has rather easily dissolved. This latter alternative is more feasible in America than it could have been in Kafka's German-speaking world because in this country the wide-open gates of assimilation do not have a hidden trip-wire inside. An American writer of Jewish extraction can become, let us say, Norman Mailer, making himself heir to the literary legacy of Hemingway, O'Farrell, Dos Passos, cultivating the moral stance and style of the American tough guy and loner, scrupulously avoiding,

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among all possible self-images (as Mailer would observe at the beginning of *Armies of the Night*) that of the Jewish boy from Brooklyn with the adenoidal voice, suffering from too much mother-love — in other words, being anything but Alexander Portnoy.

There was a time, and perhaps for some American Jews it is not yet over, when many felt that Portnoy and his swarming brood of fictional cousins might be the expression of a distinctive Jewish literary culture in this country. This feeling, I suspect, was all along chiefly a reflection of the need of American Jews to be sustained by the illusion of possessing a culture of their own, as they drifted away from their immigrant origins; and as such it was closely cognate with the nostalgia for the old East Side and the world of the *shtetl*. American Jewish genre fiction is, of course, still being written by the ream today, but for the most part it seems to have slipped to the level of the popular commercial novel, Jewish family sagas being especially prominent in the last few years, and there is not much sense now that it stands high on the agenda of serious American writing. The illusion of a Jewish literary renaissance in America is a phenomenon of the early post-war period, and, with a few minor qualifications, can be set within a span of a dozen years. One might date its beginning from the publication in 1953 of *The Adventures of Augie March*, Saul Bellow's ambitious picaresque novel rooted in the Jewish immigrant milieu of Chicago and proclaiming itself, in the manifesto of its opening sentence, an unabashedly American work ("I am an American, Chicago-born," Augie announces at the very outset). In the new cultural pluralism of the post-war years, that manifesto was readily accepted: *Augie March* was given the National Book Award for Fiction and was thought by many to have inaugurated a new era in the American novel. By the end of the 50s, the output of prestigious Jewish fiction had built to a crescendo: in 1958, Bernard Malamud's striking collection of stories, *The Magic Barrel*, was published; in 1959, Philip Roth's first volume of fiction, *Goodbye, Columbus*, appeared; and almost as though such honors from the American literary world were to be expected as a matter of course, each was accorded the National Book Award for Fiction. I would place the peak of this whole vogue in 1964, which saw the publication of Bellow's *Herzog* (once again, a winner of the National Book Award) and the softcover reissue of Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep*, a masterpiece largely neglected for thirty years and now a paperback bestseller, proclaimed a great American novel on the front page of the *New York Times Book Review*. After the mid-60s, the movement gradually ebbs, and while Jewish genre writing continues to be written, it no longer seems, as I have said, to be the central impulse in American letters that it once appeared to some observers.

Interestingly, some American Jewish writing after that false springtime from the 1950s through the early 60s has turned to sober self-reflection on the nature of this sort of literature and the kind of cultural predicament it embodies. Perhaps the single most instructive

document in this regard is Philip Roth's short novel, *The Ghost Writer* (1979), not so much for its success as a piece of fiction (I find it rather schematic) but for the critical argument it makes. Though *The Ghost Writer* is not, strictly speaking a *roman à clef*, Roth does try to delineate the range of possibilities of American Jewish fiction by offering us fictitious extrapolations of its holy trinity: Bellow, Malamud, and Roth himself. The narrator, Nathan Zuckerman, a character who first appeared in *My Life As a Man* (1974), is patently a stand-in for the young Philip Roth. Felix Ab-ravanel, a writer who does not actually appear in the novel but who is repeatedly mentioned, would seem to be the Bellow figure here (perhaps with a touch of Mailer) — churning with energy and extravagant egotism, flaunting his parade of wives and his alimony woes, creating passionate larger-than-life characters that recall the exuberance of Isaac Babel's Odessa stories. The central literary figure in the book is the short-story writer E.I. Lonoff, to whose rural New England home the young Zuckerman comes as a worshipful disciple. Lonoff is transparently projected out of the life and work of Bernard Malamud. Here, for example, are some characteristic remarks by Zuckerman about his own perception of Lonoff's fiction:

I first came upon Lonoff's thwarted, secretive, imprisoned souls, and realized that out of everything humbling from which my own striving, troubled father had labored to elevate us all, a literature of such dour wit and poignancy could be shamelessly conceived.

And Zuckerman, the bright English major, goes on to cite his own celebration of Lonoff in a senior essay which spoke of Lonoff's

vaudevillian's feel for legend and landscape . . . his "translated" English to lend a midly ironic flavor to even the most commonplace expression; . . . his cryptic, muted, dreamy resonance.

But why should Lonoff-Malamud be a Jewish writer at all? the narrator is led to wonder, and this question leads us to the heart of the larger issue we are trying to understand. Though there may be odd little echoes of Yiddish in his prose, he writes, after all, in American English, is thought of (in the period in which the story is set, the late 50s) as an important new presence in American literature, and he lives in the New England woods with his Gentile wife and his fair-haired children. "I think of you," Zuckerman-Roth, oppressed by the parochialism of his own Jewish upbringing, tells Lonoff-Malamud, "as the Jew who got away." And yet, as the narrator recognizes, a Lonoff story without a Jew is unthinkable, and somehow, for all his absorption into the American landscape, the tonalities of his work remain stubbornly Jewish. Lonoff might ideally like to simplify matters by putting Jewish origins entirely behind him — one could cite the actual instances of Malamud's first novel, *The Natural*, set in the world of the great American game, and Roth's own facsimile Wasp novel, *When She Was Good* — but no writer can sever himself with such

surgical neatness from his own formative past; and, so, Lonoff quite properly responds to Zuckerman: "Well, the Jew who got away didn't get away altogether."

Now, for Kafka, with whom I began, this amphibian character of the Jewish writer is an intolerable predicament, an "impossibility," as he says, but what is noteworthy about Roth's novel is that it tries to convert the predicament into a positive virtue. I can recall no other work of American Jewish fiction that makes such a strenuous effort to validate its own enterprise by establishing a literary tradition for it. Unfortunately, there happen to be only two European Jewish fiction writers in non-Jewish languages of unquestionably major stature, Kafka and Babel; so Roth must make a great deal of them as forebears and models for his Lonoff-Malamud, adding Chekhov, Gogol, and a general sense of East-European literary modes which the American Jewish writer of East-European immigrant background is supposed to possess and assimilate artistically in order to shape his special contribution to American literature. All this is rather touching as a writer's confession of his need for a distinctive cultural context, but it is not very convincing as literary history. To state matters bluntly in the case of the real Malamud, as a writer he is really a gifted eccentric who, early on, invented a narrow but brilliant mode of short fiction peculiar to himself, connected only in the most tenuous way either with Jewish experience or with European literature; and having exhausted that limited vein, he has been floundering for nearly two decades. The fictional Lonoff, of course, is not obliged to jibe in all respects with the actual Malamud, but the disparity between what is claimed for the former and the actuality of the latter suggests how much the ideal of an international modern Jewish literary tradition in Western languages is an alluring fantasy and no more.

Perhaps the central fact about American Jewish fiction is that it is an expression of Jews in transition (we should not forget Kafka's three impossibilities), and by virtue of that problematic fact it cannot really meet our test of authentic Jewishness or powerful high culture. Indeed, I would argue that some of the best pieces of fiction by American Jewish writers have served mainly to articulate the ambivalences of a confused cultural identity, or the reflex of guilt in the transition from one identity to another. This is, let me hasten to add, an important function for imaginative literature to perform — not only for the writer confessionally, on behalf of himself, but for large numbers of his readers, who, whether consciously or not, find in the fiction a potent speaking image of their own unsettled and unsettling conflicts. The exploration of ambivalent identity, however, does not uncover firm enough or deep enough ground for the creation of what we would like to think of as a culture.

Let me briefly illustrate this use of fiction as a vehicle for ventilating ambivalence from the early and widely read work of Roth and Malamud, for I think that the imagination of ambivalence is what really connects

them and other Jewish writers rather than any modern Jewish literary tradition. The most striking paradigm for this kind of fiction is provided by Roth's story, "Eli the Fanatic." Eli, it will be recalled, a successful young lawyer in a highly assimilated suburban Jewish community, is given the task of diplomatically asking a yeshiva which has invaded the genteel town to move to a more appropriate neighborhood. The black-garbed yeshiva teacher in the story is a concentration-camp survivor who, it is intimated, has been castrated by the Nazis. When Eli encounters stubborn resistance from the yeshiva, he gets the notion of at least making the intruders less offensive to the American eye by putting them in modern dress, and so he sends one of his Brooks Brothers suits for the teacher to wear. Then he finds a cardboard box at his back door with the teacher's clothes sent him in exchange, exuding a terrible, oppressive dank blackness which is also somehow alluring. The neurotic Eli discovers he cannot resist that allure, and he dons the whole black outfit, not even omitting the *arba kanfos*, the fringed ritual undergarment, and he goes marching down the main street of Woodenton to the hospital where his wife is giving birth to a son. Obviously, a chief element of the pressure of guilt that impels him to this bizarre act is that he must assume the role of Jewish father in place of the sterilized refugee. Throughout the story, the relationship between the yeshiva types and Eli and his friends has been defined as a relationship between Jew and other: when Eli first steps outside his house in the black suit, a neighbor frantically phones to say, "Eli, there's a Jew at your door," and he tries to explain, "*That's me.*" It hardly needs to be said that the exchange of clothing is an exchange of identities. The only thing that links American Eli, the comfortable denizen of post-war suburbia, to the Jew from the ancestral world is Eli's sense of guilt over his own affluent assimilation, over his not having been a victim. This is no basis for identity, only for a frantic gesture of sheer craziness: I can remain an American, or I can renounce my American world and swathe myself in patriarchal blackness, become the other who is the Jew. There is no middle ground.

Malamud, in his own fashion, has written exactly the same story, or at any rate a story that has the same thematic substructure, even using the same central symbol. I have in mind "The Last Mohican," where the American art-student Fidelman, newly arrived in Rome to write his dissertation, is confronted by another sort of Old World Jew and Holocaust survivor, the professional *schnorrer* Susskind. Not satisfied with a mere handout, Susskind wants Fidelman to give him his second suit. When the American indignantly refuses, Susskind steals his research notes, and the outraged Fidelman begins a frantic search for him all over Rome. At the very end, after a dream in which Fidelman sees a Giotto painting of Saint Francis giving his robe to a poor knight, the art-student goes chasing after the refugee, who still eludes him. Fidelman is last heard shouting, "The suit is yours. All is forgiven." This is not, I would say, a story about the importance of charity, as the invocation of the model of Saint Francis

might lead one to believe, but, more essentially, a story about the ambiguities of Jewish solidarity in a world after Hitler, about the tight and narrow nexus of guilt that connects the comfortable American with the European survivor. Fidelman never manages to give his suit to Susskind; Eli effects an exchange of garments and by so doing yields to an episode of madness; in both cases, the fiction is devoted to tracing the squirm of ambivalence between two thoroughly incompatible identities, one of which has actually been rejected by the writer except as a hypothesis to play out in the story.

Elsewhere, Malamud has invented other situations to express the same dilemma: "The Lady of the Lake," where the American hiding his Jewish identity falls in love with a supposed Italian noblewoman, who turns out to be a concentration-camp survivor and who rejects him because she thinks he is a Gentile; "The Jewbird," a fantasy where a Yiddish-accented bird visitor with the smell of herring on his breath is finally cast out to die in the wintry cold because his vulgar presence is felt to be intrusive by the American Jewish paterfamilias. (This, of course, is once again the plot of "Eli the Fanatic" with a different ending.) And *The Ghost Writer* itself tries to engage the guilty ambivalences of the American Jew after the European genocide in still another way through Zuckerman's fantasy of meeting the real Anne Frank and at last justifying himself in the eyes of his censorious Jewish readers by joining his destiny with hers.

I would like to propose as a limiting case in this general use of American Jewish fiction as an instrument for the expression of conflicts in identity Cynthia Ozick's brilliant novella, *Envy; or, Yiddish in America* (1969). It is a story that has, as I shall try to explain, resonances lacking in the Roth and Malamud pieces we have been considering, but, finally, it is controlled by the same problematic. Like *The Ghost Writer*, it is a self-reflexive fiction that extrapolates from the actual careers of well-known writers in order to ponder the possibilities of Jewish culture in this country. In this case, as most readers recognized at once, the writers in question are Yiddish: Ostrover, the spectacularly successful novelist whose work is full of sex and demons obviously corresponding to I.B. Singer, and the envious neglected poet Edelshtein, from whose point of view the story is told, corresponding to Yakov Glatstein. There is something inspired in the way Cynthia Ozick invents, out of the careers of Singer and Glatstein, a painful confrontation of opposite literary and cultural alternatives (indeed, nothing else she has written goes this deep). Ostrover, in the story, is a cruel egotist and a shameless trickster in life and in art, but it is also intimated that he has genius, a sort of genius happily perceptible through the veil of translation and also in tune with modern sensibilities. His extraordinary success, however repugnant to the rest of the Yiddish world, is finally justified by real achievement. There has been some debate among readers as to whether Edelshtein is equally to be thought of as a

great poet or, rather, as a self-deluded second-rater merely envious of a more popular and more gifted rival. I would conclude that we are clearly meant to assume greatness in Edelshtein, not only because of the allusion to Glatstein (surely a major modern poet) but also because of the power of his culminating interior monologues, the evidence of his poetry briefly quoted in the story (which is as good as Cynthia Ozick can make it), and because a central thematic tension would disappear if he were a poet without talent.

Edelshtein, the rancorous old man hungering to be known through translation by the great world, becomes emblematic of the fate of indigenous Jewish culture, which may be subtle and profound and vibrant in its use of its own distinctive idiom, but which, in relation to the vast mainstream of global culture, is doomed to be a tiny rivulet trickling off into the backwaters of oblivion. Edelshtein's trenchant verdict on the new American Jewish writers may be all too justified — "Spawned in America, pogroms a rumor, *mamaloshen* a stranger, history a vacuum" — but it is they, and by an accident of cultural fashion, Ostrover, who are read, not he.

The tension, then, between the acclaimed Ostrover and the unsung Edelshtein is a poignant and historically suggestive one, and there is no counterpart for it in the work of Roth, Malamud, and the more typical American Jewish writers, who tend, as we have seen, to imagine the unassimilated Jewish cultural community as a monolith of otherness without internal conflicts and divergent possibilities. There is, however, a second line of thematic tension in *Envy* which brings it close to the paradigm of "Eli the Fanatic." Between Ostrover and Edelshtein stands Hannah, an American-born girl majoring in English at Barnard who happens to have learned Yiddish from her grandfather. She is one of the drove of translators enlisted by Ostrover, and on the terrible winter night when the story takes place, Edelshtein is consumed by the fantasy that she can be persuaded to become his translator and so convey his achievement to the great world. When importuned by the poet at the end of the story, she responds with a furious tirade, denouncing the Yiddishists as a swarm of parasitic old men, obsessed with suffering, whom she would like to see die and leave her in peace to enjoy the breadth and liveliness of modern Western culture. (The story, it should be noted, continually associates Jewishness, as much American Jewish fiction has done, with oppressive images of old age — decrepit, sagging, hairy bodies, aches and wheezes, dressers crowded with unguents and medications.) This resentful side of Hannah's ambivalence brings us back, more or less, to the expulsion of the Jewbird, to Eli's attempted exorcism of the black-suited yeshiva bunch. More or less, because there is a significant element of "more" that is worth noting.

The Jew from the ancestral world here is not merely a dybbuk from the past pursuing the ambivalent American but a figure given its own

reverberant voice. Just before the end of the story, Edelshtein, brooding over Hannah's eagerness to be part of a larger history, suddenly proposes to himself the idea of viewing the issue of particularism and universalism from the other end of the telescope, mindful of the three thousand continuous years of vision and turmoil and national greatness that the Jews carry with them:

I'm at home only in a prison, history is my prison, the ravine [at Babi Yar] my house — only listen — suppose it turns out that the destiny of the Jews is vast, open, eternal, and that Western Civilization is meant to dwindle, shrivel, shrink into the ghetto of the world — what of history then?

This is, I would imagine, as far as one can go in using fiction as a means of articulating the ambivalence of the American Jew's cultural identity. It goes farther than Malamud, Roth, and others because there is an informed sense that the ancestral world has its own powerful claims to make, is more than a mere projection of the vaguely and intermittently guilty consciousness of the assimilated American Jew. But this remains a story about living between two or three impossibilities. Elsewhere, in a moment of unguarded and rather fanciful optimism, Cynthia Ozick has entertained the notion that American Jewish writers might be in the process of creating a "new Yiddish" in their work — a language drawn from American as Yiddish once was drawn from German but infused with Jewish specificity in its nuances of feeling, its range of idioms, images, and syntactic maneuvers. In the past, of course, Jews could create a Yiddish because they possessed a language of their own, Hebrew, with which they were able to interweave and refashion the Germanic borrowings, but this is hardly the case for most American Jews. The literary evidence, moreover, points rather toward an impulse of assimilation into the larger American tradition. American Jewish writing, including Cynthia Ozick's own, seems largely a phenomenon of transition, and in that regard we would do well to note another characterization of this sort of phenomenon by Kafka — it is one of his disturbing animal images — in the letter to Max Brod from which I quoted earlier:

Most young Jews who began to write German wanted to leave Jewishness behind them. . . . But with their posterior legs they were still glued to their fathers' Jewishness and with their waving anterior legs they found no new ground. The ensuing despair became their inspiration.

Perhaps one or two modifications should be made to adopt this disquieting image to the American situation. Given the general differentness of the American Diaspora, given especially the recent American openness to the voices of minority cultures, the straddling four-legged beast seems often to feel not despair but a kind of antic exuberance in its awkward sprawl between two cultures, one a memory, an idea, a recurrent twinge of guilt, the other a reality, and therefore, finally solid ground to set foot on.

If I appear to have been painting a rather gloomy picture, that is only

because in some quarters of the American Jewish community since the Second World War there have been unreasonable expectations of what a literature written in the English language on this continent might do for the Jews — expectations, it should be said, neither shared nor encouraged by very many of the writers. From a historical viewpoint, it is important to keep in mind that though Jews have lived in many very different cultures and have been profoundly influenced by them, they have never created a distinctive imaginative literature except in indigenous Jewish languages. When it comes to writing poetry and fiction, the logic of the literature seems to go along with the logic of the language. If you choose to write in Russian or German or Arabic, the ultimate horizon by which your work is oriented, whatever its Jewish emphases, is the tradition of Russian or German or Arabic literature. Judah Halevi could write *The Kuzari* in Arabic (using Hebrew characters, as was the practice) because in his period one naturally wrote philosophy in Arabic — all the modes of conceptualization were drawn from the Arabic universe of discourse. But when, for example, he wrote his astonishingly beautiful sea poems, it is inconceivable that he could have used any medium but Hebrew: both *The Kuzari* and the poems are powerful expressions of Jewish culture, but the latter, as a manifestation of literary culture, required an indigenous language.

The instance of the bilingual writers of medieval Spain may suggest that, in fact, what we ought to be doing is to look elsewhere than at poetry and fiction for signs of a nascent Jewish culture in this country. There is hardly room for blithe optimism on this score, but I myself remain rather hopeful, especially about what has been happening over the last decade, and I point to a perhaps surprising arena that has been showing encouraging signs of Jewish life — the academy. As a matter of historical coincidence, at just about the time when the vogue of American Jewish fiction was peaking in the mid-60s, a new generation of American-born, American-trained Jewish scholars was beginning to come into its own. By the late 1960s, a serious professional organization had been established, the Association for Jewish Studies, which now has many hundreds of members, an intellectually lively and various annual meeting, and a scholarly journal of its own. More important, mature and original scholarly work by this native generation has been appearing with growing frequency, work that is free, by the nature of the discourse involved, from the linguistic “impossibilities” observable in belletristic writing, for one does not need the medium of Hebrew or a “new Yiddish” to write a history of rabbinic literature, a study of Jewish thought in the Hellenistic world, an account of the Marranos.

In invoking Jewish scholarship as evidence of cultural vitality, I don’t want to seem to be indulging in an illusion I once publicly criticized in others — the illusion that the presence of Jewish studies on American campuses can somehow compensate for the grave deficiencies of the

Jewish home and Jewish primary education and can imbue students with a cohesive sense of identity as Jews. I still maintain that the university classroom, as a matter of both principle and of practical fact, is not a place for the forging of ethnic, religious, or national identities, and that the perspective brought to bear on materials there has to be chiefly one of dispassionate analysis, not impassioned commitment. What I have in mind in the present context is not the influence of teachers of Judaica on the young, but rather, the published work of those teachers as products of American Jewish life, as shaping instances of what could be one important facet of a possible Jewish culture in this country. I would like to contemplate, in other words, the sundry studies that have been appearing of biblical literature, the Talmud, medieval Jewish philosophy, the Kabbalah, Hasidism, Zionism, and so forth, as alternatives of original cultural expression to the stories and novels we have up to now been considering.

It might be objected that historical scholarship is, after all, an antiquarian, enterprise which has little to do with the contemporary urgency of the more primary creations that comprise literature. It is true that, for a long time, a certain musty antiquarianism attached itself to a good deal of Jewish historical research and, in the egregious instance of the 19th-century German *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, some scholars were consciously motivated by the desire to give Judaism an honorable burial. All that has dramatically changed in the new generation of American Jewish scholars, as I shall try briefly to explain.

Through the first half of this century, perhaps until as late as the 1960s, Jewish scholarship in this country was characterized by two basic external conditions: with very few and marginal exceptions, its centers were in the Jewish seminaries and, with virtually no exceptions, its practitioners were European-born, usually also European-trained. To reduce this situation to a rough formula: Jewish scholarship in this country was essentially the old *Wissenschaft*, with most of its methods, assumptions, and mental set, transplanted to American soil. It is hardly surprising that this sort of scholarship should have had only limited connections with American culture in general or with the distinctive forms of Jewish life that might be emerging in this country. By the end of the 60s, most of the action had moved from the seminaries to the university campuses, and was being carried on by scholars who had grown up in America and received their academic training here. These two changes, in themselves, have resulted in a much fuller interplay between Jewish scholarship and the larger American intellectual realm, and it has been a very productive interplay.

As for the scholars themselves, in virtually every instance I can think of, the decision to devote a career to the rigorous understanding of some aspect of the Jewish historical experience has been directly connected with an existential choice to affirm a cultural identity as a Jew. The typical earlier pattern among Jewish scholars was an Orthodox upbringing,

including talmudic training in a traditional yeshiva, which the scholar then carried with him into the Western world of Ph.D.'s and footnoted publications, sometimes maintaining a version of the early Orthodoxy, more often showing rather a kind of intellectual nostalgia for Orthodoxy's world of learning. There are still occasional instances of this pattern among the post-war generation of American Jewish scholars, but it is far more common to find people who were raised in homes whose Jewish character ranged from inconsistent to dilute or vestigial, and who at some early point made a conscious decision to express their Jewishness in a different way from that of their parents, intently studying Jewish tradition, mastering its languages, perhaps adopting a personal observance of it in one fashion or another. Many of these scholars represent, in other words, a new kind of Jew, distinctly made in America. One can detect, in much of their work, however disparate their methods and their topics, an enlivening sense of personal recovery of the Jewish past which is expressed through a bold intellectual recuperation of major texts, figures, and historical eras.

To make this generalization more concrete, let me mention four exemplary publications that have appeared within the last two years — three books and a new journal. The three books are *Tormented Master: A Life of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav* by Arthur Green (1979), *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides* by Isidore Twersky (1980), and *Judaism: The Evidence of the Mishnah* by Jacob Neusner. The journal is *Prooftexts*, descriptively subtitled "A Journal of Jewish Literary History," and published by the Johns Hopkins University Press (the books as well, it might be noted, are all published by university presses, not by Jewish houses). The three books in question could scarcely be more different from one another, and the Jewish background and sensibility of the three writers are equally divergent. Green was educated at Brandeis; did his doctorate with Brandeis' senior Jewish historian, Alexander Altmann; was long active in the *havurah* movement; and comes to the academic study of Hasidism out of a personal, albeit non-Orthodox, involvement in Jewish mysticism. Neusner was educated at Harvard, then the Jewish Theological Seminary and Columbia, and completed his doctorate under the guidance of Morton Smith, Columbia's distinguished historian of early Christianity and Hellenistic Jewry. Twersky, unlike the other two, was raised in a traditionally devout home, the scion of a Hasidic rabbinic line. He has never removed himself from that sphere of pious origins, but at Harvard he became the leading disciple of Harry Wolfson, the eminent expositor of Philo, Spinoza, and medieval Jewish philosophy. Green's biography of Rabbi Nahman is his first book; Neusner's and Twersky's books are culminating works by scholars in their late forties. Yet all three studies share an ability to restore their materials to a dense historical context and to make the internal dynamics of their subjects fully accessible to the modern mind without modernizing distortion. What Twersky says of his

own aim could equally be applied to what Green has done with Rabbi Nahman and what Neusner has done with Mishnaic Judaism, however different their respective approaches:

to extricate Maimonides from the domain of historical anonymity, where his identity is blurred and beclouded and to delineate his individual contours: his methods and achievements, critical attitudes, and traditional convictions.

If scholarly works like these meet two of our initial specifications — an informed connection with the Jewish past and the seriousness of high culture — do they reflect any noticeable American component as expressions of American Jewish culture? I think it is safe to say that all three, at the very least in the nuances of their formulation and probably in more substantive ways, could have been thought out and written only in America. Even Twersky's book, which is the most traditional in method, being the systematic exposition of one complex work, the *Mishneh Torah*, reflects the orientation of the discipline of intellectual history in which the author was trained, and it is surely revelatory that the first few paragraphs of the preface should cite A.N. Whitehead, Henry James, and René Wellek (the Harvard-Yale connection stands out) as methodological guides for this investigation of a Jewish legal-philosophical text. Green's *Tormented Master* would not have the shape and substance it does without the model of Erik Erikson's *Young Man Luther* and the general American genre of biography. Neusner's discrimination of historical stages in the evolution of the Mishnah and his bold inference of a set of urgent philosophical and historical issues implicit in this mass of concrete legal formulations could not have been achieved without his very American feeling for the unity of historical studies as a discipline and without what he has learned from historians working on topics other than Jewish ones, sometimes in far-removed periods. All three of these books, then, are marked in varying degree and manner by a sense of staking out new territory in the understanding of the Jewish past, with methods and an élan that have American origins.

Finally, I would like to suggest that the excitement of primary discovery which informs these three works is also perceptible on a smaller scale in the first three issues of *Prooftexts*. The journal, though it includes an occasional Israeli contributor, is manifestly a homemade American product. Almost all its editors are Americans in their thirties, one or two even younger, and one senses in virtually all of the articles an energetic impulse to seize the great Jewish texts, ancient, medieval, and modern, and to put them in a new, vital focus. Not surprisingly, a few of the articles have been disappointing or even exasperating, but, in three modest-sized issues, *Prooftexts* has already published several really admirable pieces, and altogether it reflects a feeling of intellectual effervescence that one does not readily associate with Jewish learned journals. These sundry readings, moreover, of biblical literature, rabbinic texts, modern Hebrew and Yid-

dish literature, would not have taken the forms they did without such various local models as the New York critics of the 40s and 50s, the New Critics, the Harvard theorists of oral-formulaic poetry, the recent American recensions of Structuralist thinking on literature.

These allusive remarks about recent American Jewish scholarship have been made, not by way of summing up, but in an effort to look around and point forward. The disappearance of the American Jew has been a prediction solemnly intoned for the past several decades, with or without demographic data, and with varying emphases; but I am increasingly impressed by the stubborn insistence of surprising numbers of American Jews about finding ways — sometimes, perhaps rather peculiar ways — to assert themselves as Jews. With such insistence, one ought to be able to detect at least an occasional glimmering of an American Jewish culture in the making. My guess is that such glimmerings will brighten and multiply in several directions over the next decade or two. For the moment, it would be well to remember that the length and breadth of Jewish culture in this country need not be defined by the bleak curve running between *A Mother's Kisses* and *To an Early Grave*, that there are other, perhaps more encouraging directions in which to look.

The Testimonial Luncheon for Dr. Gordis

A Message of Tribute

DR. ALFRED GOTTSCHALK,

Pres., HUC-JIR

(as read by DR. JONATHAN SARNA)

I'M PRESENTING THIS MESSAGE ON BEHALF of Dr. Alfred Gottschalk, the President of Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion. He regrets that he could not be present. Those of you who know President Gottschalk undoubtedly know how difficult it is for someone of my stature to stand in his shoes. So, I'm going to ask you, in the spirit of this morning, to exercise your creative faculties and I hope that this message will be suitably elevating:

Thirty years ago, when Robert Gordis and the American Jewish Congress launched JUDAISM as a "Quarterly Journal of Jewish Life and Thought" many of us wished the new venture longevity and success — *biz hundert und tsantsig*. Well, the days passed quickly and issue 120 has now appeared. The time has come to make a new wish. But first let us look back.

For three decades JUDAISM has aimed to stimulate an informed awareness of Jewish affairs, to encourage Jewish scholarship, and to foster the affirmation of Jewish religious, cultural and historic identity. From the beginning, editor Robert Gordis lamented "the dangerous tendency toward the hardening of party lines on the contemporary scene" which threatened to make communication, let alone understanding and cooperation, all but impossible. Against this, he vowed to welcome "new and unconventional interpretations, whatever their standpoint," and dedicated JUDAISM to "the quest for truth in the spirit of freedom."

It all sounded like a utopian vision. One doubted whether it could come to pass. Yet somehow the first volume managed to bring together under one roof Buber, Heschel and Herberg; Cohon, Klausner, Konvitz and Kallen; Emanuel Rackman, Solomon Freehof and Bezalel Sherman — and others. It was indeed an auspicious beginning. And there would be no letup.

In the ensuing years the most diverse ideological positions have found expression in JUDAISM's pages. Political and religious antagonists have confronted one another time and again in various numbers, witness the issue devoted to the Arab problem in Israel, or those devoted to the various branches of American Judaism. In addition to these, symposia on subjects ranging from "My Jewish Affirmation" to "The Temper of Our Times" have offered a full spectrum of views on both timeless and contemporary Jewish concerns. Then there have been special issues exploring subjects with a thoroughness not usually found outside textbooks. The

one on Judaism and Islam and the two on Jewish Life in America stand as classics. But one could easily multiply examples.

JUDAISM has also displayed a remarkable ability to ferret out and encourage promising young scholars. Volume 1 contained contributions by Arthur A. Cohen, then a student on a fellowship at the Jewish Theological Seminary; Arthur Hertzberg, then a chaplain in the Air Force; Naomi Cohen, then a doctoral student at Columbia University, and our very own Paul M. Steinberg, then Hillel director at the University of California at Berkeley. The most recent volume, I am happy to say, carries on this magnificent tradition, with several fine contributions by students, young rabbis and newly minted Ph.D.s.

Of course, JUDAISM has always had its share of old and distinguished contributors — a notable roster. But it has not grown old itself; instead, like its editor it remains perpetually youthful, ever on the lookout for the new and the vibrant. Reading through its long list of contributors, now numbering in the hundreds, is like reading through a who's who, a who was who, and a who will be who — all rolled into one.

My friends, five years ago, following JUDAISM's one hundredth issue, the editors concluded that JUDAISM was more necessary than ever, given the "resurgence of interest in Jewish religion, philosophy and ethics among a growing sector of Jewish youth and their elders." Today, amidst the welcome revival of Jewishness manifested in many quarters, and the unwelcome growth of fanaticism manifested in many other quarters, JUDAISM's role remains a vital one. I do not at this time wish it *biz hundert und tsvantsig*, nor even the years of Methusalah. Instead, I wish it perpetual youth and ongoing vibrance. May it continue in the future as it has in the past: to teach, to question, to challenge, and to inspire — for that is what JUDAISM is all about.

The Contribution of Dr. Gordis

HENRY SIEGMAN

Executive Director, American Jewish Congress

AS YOU KNOW, WE ARE MEETING IN A Reform institution and I assume that at least one of their residual traditions is German punctuality. So, we're trying to adhere to that and get you back upstairs for the two o'clock session. It is my pleasure to preside over this luncheon session, which is a tribute to Dr. Robert Gordis, and I consider that a very special personal privilege. I will keep my remarks as short as possible in order to leave as much time as possible for Dr. Gordis' presentation.

Several years ago I attended a meeting sponsored by the White House, and the Secretary of Energy addressed us. During the course of

the address, President Carter walked in and, of course, the Secretary stopped his speech. President Carter made a presentation, a rather impressive one, and then walked out. The Secretary was expected to resume his speech, but he said, "Ladies and gentlemen, there are two reasons why I cannot do so. The first one is that it's simply difficult to follow our President and the second one is that, by mistake, the President walked out with my manuscript." For a moment, I thought that Dr. Sarna had taken my manuscript, instead of his, and walked off with it, but happily it is still here.

I think that those of you who are familiar with the American Jewish Congress will agree that it is impossible and inappropriate to have a tribute to JUDAISM and to Dr. Robert Gordis without at least acknowledging and also paying tribute to the Manager Editor of the magazine, Ruth Waxman. Typically, she is sitting in the back, quietly, but, Ruth, please stand up so we can say "thank you" to you as well.

I read the other day — I believe it was in the *Jerusalem Post* — that Ephraim Kishon, the Israeli satirist, lectured in Paris on the subject "Is There an Israeli Humor and Why Not?" I think that our own formulation of the theme of the day is not much less tendentious but at least it was not with malice aforethought, for if there exist doubts — and we heard a good many of them expressed this morning — about the existence of an American Jewish culture, certainly the question was never in doubt for anyone associated with the American Jewish Congress or, more specifically, with Dr. Robert Gordis. Bob Gordis, his formidable personality, his rich life and his impressive works all constitute, in themselves, a sufficient answer to that question. If, by an American Jewish culture, we mean one that gives evidence of creative interaction between American culture and Jewish tradition and Jewish sensibility, certainly Bob Gordis may well be one of the most distinguished products of that culture. At the same time, he has been among the most preeminent catalysts of this symbiosis between Jewish and American culture, however we define it, as well as one of its most critical analysts and chroniclers. That this is not the standard encomium trotted out on testimonial occasions is evident very quickly even by a cursory glance at Bob's biographical sketch. And I have a rather impressive sketch in front of me, which I do not intend to read to you, except to mention some of his scholarly works.

Among the more prominent ones that he has offered are: *The Biblical Text in the Making*; *Kohelet: The Man and His World*; *The Book of God and Man*; *The Study of Job*; *Poets, Prophets and Sages*; *The Song of Songs and Lamentations: Introduction, Translation and Commentary*; *The Word and the Book, Studies in Biblical Language and Literature* and so on. Also commenting on, and more reflective of this cultural process that we spoke of this morning are: *Judaism for the Modern Age*; *The Root and the Branch: Judaism and the Free Society*; *Judaism in a Christian World* and *Leave a Little to God*. More recently there have been *Sex and the Family: The Jewish Tradition*; *Love*

and Sex: A Modern Jewish Perspective; Understanding Judaism and this goes on and on. But I really do not want to take your time and, more importantly, Dr. Gordis's time.

In the essay from which Phil Baum quoted this morning, that appears in the Fall 1981 issue of JUDAISM Magazine, Bob, like other speakers, expresses some surprise, indeed, he marvels, at the fact that it was the American Jewish Congress that began and became the home of JUDAISM and that it remains so to this very day. I suppose the fact that a publication like JUDAISM could not be sponsored by the denominational groupings, but that individual Orthodox, Conservative and Reformed scholars were able to get together on the so-called "secular" ground of the American Jewish Congress to begin this enterprise, in itself speaks volumes about the complex relationships among our three branches in this country. But that is a subject for this afternoon which I will not impinge upon.

I suppose that one of the reasons why the relationship between AJCongress and JUDAISM may seem odd to some people, is Congress' tenacious and uncompromising commitment to the separation of church and state. Fortunately for Jewish life, there has never been any confusion within the American Jewish Congress about the inappropriateness of that distinction when it comes to the internal life of the Jewish community. One cannot be concerned about Jewish security without paying attention to the life of the mind and the spirit. Bob Gordis's towering presence in our midst has always served as a reminder of that important truth. That is why we have always treasured his association with the American Jewish Congress.

If you'll allow me, I will read the text of the plaque: "The American Jewish Congress presents this expression of gratitude and affection to Robert Gordis. During the three decades that he has been associated with JUDAISM as a founder, editorial adviser and editor, he has infused it with intellectual integrity and scholarly excellence that have made it one of the outstanding journals of Jewish life. His deep personal commitment to Israel has helped shape the magazine into a powerful instrument in the service of Jewish unity." The statement is signed by Howard Squadron and by me.

A Brief Response

ROBERT GORDIS
Editor, JUDAISM

I WAS AFRAID THAT THERE MIGHT BE A plaque and my fears have been made a reality. Henry, may I thank you and the members of Congress leadership, as well as the membership of the organization as a whole, for this tribute to the journal. As a matter of

fact, it has been a very rewarding relationship for me all through these years and those of you are are subscribers, as I hope you all are — we're always engaged in a campaign — can read the story of the relationship between JUDAISM and the American Jewish Congress and the origins of the journal in a paper entitled: "The Genesis of JUDAISM" which appeared in the Fall issue just recently and traced the early years preceding and following its launching.

The uninterrupted publication of the journal is, to be sure, the result of a measure of Jewish obstinacy, but more importantly, it is a symbol of the cooperation we have received from our contributors, young or old, famous or yet unknown, who have given us so freely of the fruit of their labor and thought. Finally, we have constantly derived encouragement from the support of our subscribers, so many of whom have expressed, both orally and in writing, their appreciation for the goals and achievements of JUDAISM.

Reform Judaism's Adaptation to America

SAMUEL E. KARFF

ON BEHALF OF THE EDITORIAL BOARD OF THE Journal of Reform Judaism I salute JUDAISM Magazine. For three decades this Journal has treated us to a high level of Jewish discourse.

I regard it as delightfully ironic that JUDAISM, a journal sponsored by a "secular Jewish defense agency," should, over the years, have provided an arena for serious theological reflection. I suppose this is another example of the Lord's power to select improbable instruments for the fulfillment of His purposes!

I applaud the insightful presentation by Professor Sidorsky and the comments shared by my colleagues. David Sidorsky is on target when he notes that, in the American ambience, the synagogue has been transformed into a "family affair." Most rabbis will ruefully note that a Bar Mizvah child does not stand before a pre-existent minyan of worshippers; rather, the child *provides* the necessary and sufficient cause of the ample congregation before whom he stands. In the absence of that Shabbat morning Bar Mizvah the attendance would be reduced considerably.

At the same time, many of us rejoice that on the American scene the synagogue has become a place where men and women share the experience of worship and shape the tone of the service. One might add that the women's movement has prodded all of our denominations to rethink the role of women in every sphere of synagogue life. The men and women who now study Torah together within the precincts of the synagogue and under its auspices would not have been doing so in a different clime and time.

Professor Sidorsky also quite correctly observes that the American synagogue has been "ethnicized." For the new suburban Jew of the Fifties, affiliation became, as it has become for many a sunbelt immigrant of the Eighties, a place to huddle with kin, a place to meet the "nice Jewish boy" and feel that one is a more normal American by being a synagogued Jew. We must also admit that many a Jew has found it possible to be active in the myriad activities of the synagogue without taking too seriously the belief of Israel's covenant with God.

The American rabbi *has* become professionalized and "pastorized," Even the members of an Orthodox congregation may negotiate business deals without benefit of rabbinic counsel, but when they are hospitalized they would not be satisfied with anything less than their rabbi's fulfillment of the mizvah of *Bikkur Holim*.

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But this professionalization is by no means altogether bad. Over the centuries and in classic literature the rabbi was, at best, much more than a judge of halakhic propriety. He helped his people affirm trust in God in the presence of the ambiguities and tragedies of the human adventure. Professionalization of the rabbinate has often enhanced the rabbi's need and his/her capacity to fulfill this role.

Let me suggest now some other ways in which the American ambience has shaped Jewish denominationalism in America. For one thing, the American experience has blunted the potential acrimony of Jewish "intrafaith relations." America's spirit of denominational peaceful co-existence, its celebration of pluralism, its respect for the larger human bond and its constitutional safeguards against one group's strong-arming another, have all affected the tone of our Jewish rivalries.

Even those of us who question the legitimacy or adequacy of the *other's brand of Judaism do not stridently attack the other*. The spectacle of a public burning of another Jew's prayerbook or a formal proclamation that so-and-so is in *herem* — which seemed odd to most Jews even years ago — would now seem absurd, even anti-Semitic. Such conduct would be dismissed as totally unacceptable by the overwhelming majority of American Jews.

We carry on civilly and fraternally not only because we are a generation living in the shadow of the Holocaust, or because, in their overt behavior, most members of Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Congregations do not differ that much from each other, or because we have "intermarried" with each other so abundantly. These are all factors; but the American scene itself is a major factor in setting the tone for our relationship with each other. If most Americans believe that it is unseemly for a Baptist preacher to deny that God hears Jewish prayers, how much the more is it unseemly for an Orthodox or Reform rabbi to attack another branch of Judaism as proto-Christian or mediievally obscurantist.

The fact that the American government grants none of us the exclusive Jewish franchise and does not formally support any denomination; the reality that Jews associated with one day school must, through Federation, seek funds contributed by Jews with a totally different orientation, also tends to promote a spirit of peaceful co-existence.

There appears to be some attempt to tighten the ranks of the denominationally faithful, to create more of a *mehizah* between "Torah true" and "deviant" Jews. As President of the SCA, Rabbi Wurzburger can address this and I know how he feels about it, but I believe that the effort of those self-isolating groups within the Jewish community will earn the contempt of most of us.

Let me now briefly note two aspects of our American scene which counter or temper the ethnicization of the synagogue. A century and a half ago, Alexis de Tocqueville visited America and, among other things, speculated on the impact of the industrial age on man's quest for faith.

Initially, he predicted that the application of technology would reduce the hold of the churches on the minds and lives of their members. America would, indeed, lead the way in deflecting people from the pursuit of pie-in-the-sky to the pursuit of an earthly salvation. Nevertheless, that astute Frenchman noted:

The soul has wants that must be satisfied, and whatever pains be taken to deflect it from itself, it soon grows weary, restless and disquieted amid the enjoyments of sense.

But since persons must first enjoy bread before they discover that “man cannot live by bread alone,” it followed (said de Tocqueville) that the technological revolution had to run its course before we could detect a revival of the hunger for the sacred.

De Tocqueville’s projection is worth pondering. Many contemporary students of our culture have noted a resurgent hunger for the sacred, especially among the affluent and educated segments of our society. Jews are not immune. As a result, our religious denominations need be less defensive about a *religious* definition of a Jewish agenda. We in synagogues need speak less apologetically about God and Torah. There is greater receptivity to preaching which assumes and responds to this hunger. This hunger for the sacred may well be a factor tempering and countering the ethnicization of the synagogue.

Still another factor which may impinge on the ethnic quality of the synagogue has been alluded to by Rabbi Kushner. It is the growing rate of intermarriage. More and more parents of children in religious schools come from homes where one parent is not Jewish, or was not born Jewish but has embraced Judaism. For these converts who are joining synagogues and shaping Jewish life, the ethnic component is the most difficult to appropriate. They have no memories of growing up Jewish in a gentile world. Their primary attraction to Judaism is the love for a Jew and the yearning for an acceptable religious meaning-system. I do not think that we have given adequate attention to the impact of “Jews by choice” and mixed marriages (with the children being raised as Jews) on the tone of our synagogues.

One final comment, perhaps most applicable to the Reform movement. In recent years there has been a pronounced change in the ritual pattern of the Reform synagogue: more Hebrew, more congregational participation, the re-introduction of ceremonies (*Havdalah*, *Hakafot*) which were conspicuously absent years ago. This is generally attributed to the influx of Jews with traditional backgrounds into the Reform Temple (which some classical Reformers regard as the sinister trojan horse phenomenon or subversion by infiltration).

Actually, one could say that this resurgent traditionalism is, in part, the reflection of a change in the larger American environment. There is a new emphasis in our culture on the need for non-rational, sensual, right-hemisphere-of-the-brain dimensions in our life. The mainline churches

have experienced a similar shift. If the original Reform liturgical revolution in Germany was a response to the *Zeitgeist*, Reform's turn toward ritual is, in its own way, a response to the cues which we are receiving from the larger culture.

Dr. Sidorsky asked about the capacity of each denomination to be faithful to its core affirmation. Certainly Reform has stressed the primacy of the ethical and the Jew's role as "a light unto the nations." We are presently engaged in turning inward to deepen our understanding of who we are and to enlarge our options for symbolic (ritual) observance. The emergence of Reform day schools in congregations like mine is part of this deepening process.

But we must guard against insularity and parochialism. We must continue to foster a concern with the larger social agenda and feel committed to do our share in *tikkun* America.

Let me close by assuming that all four of us participating in this symposium (and probably the overwhelming majority of those in attendance this afternoon) would agree that in estimating the impact of the American experience on our community and on "Jewish denominationalism" there is less ground for lamentation than for appreciation. For all its tradeoffs, we can say of the American scene *ma na'im goralenu*, how pleasant is our lot.

The American Jewish Experience: A Conservative Perspective

HAROLD S. KUSHNER

WE MAY BEGIN BY RECOGNIZING THAT EVERY variety of Judaism, indeed every form of Western religion, underwent a sea change in the process of coming to America and colliding with the American environment. The fundamental creed of American society is "this is a free country and nobody is going to tell me what to do." We base our driving patterns, our business ethics, and our religious behavior on that fundamental American creed, and any religion coming to America has invariably been influenced in the direction of greater permissiveness and less tolerance for authority, not necessarily on ideological grounds but on pragmatic ones. Only a permissive, "do your own thing" religion was likely to prosper on American soil.

So we note that the highly hierarchical, rigidly structured Protestant churches which dominated European society, — the Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists — never attracted the numbers here that they did in Europe, while the "free" churches, less given to authoritarian control, the Congregationalists and Baptists, became major forces on the American scene. Unitarianism, a small ideological splinter group in Europe, found the American environment much more congenial and flourished here. Roman Catholicism, the most authoritarian of Christian religions, found itself confronting people who affirmed themselves as Catholics but claimed for themselves the freedom to disregard the most august teachings of church authority with impunity. And Judaism, too, saw itself transformed into a religion in which the individual decided for himself what he would accept and how much he would observe.

The implicit covenant offered to the American Jew by his leader (now transformed from a *posek* into a persuader) was "Judaism will never prevent you from taking part in American life, as you so clearly wish to do." What determined the "denominational" affiliation of the American Jew, whether he would join an Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform synagogue, was not his view about Revelation or *halakhah* but the degree to which he wanted to participate fully in American life. If sharing everything with his gentile neighbors was of primary importance to him, he would be Reform, even if he would still seek out a more traditional service on his father's *yahrzeit*. If American life held few attractions for him, he would remain traditional. The Conservative position on issues like eating

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fish in a non-kosher restaurant, I am convinced, was determined less by issues of whether the platter that the fish was served on was a *kli rishon* or a *kli sheni*, than by the commitment of Conservative Judaism to its adherents that being seriously Jewish would not bar them from sharing the American way of life.

In America, Jews, like Protestants and Catholics, discovered that there is a fundamental conflict between religion and democracy. Religion is essentially authoritarian. Its decision-making process works from the top down. People in positions of authority decide what is right, and inform their followers. Sanctions of one sort or another are employed to bring about conformity with those decisions. Democratic decision-making, in contrast, works from the bottom up. The people decide, and instruct their leaders to implement their wishes. How is one to bridge the gap between "Thus says the Lord, 'Thou shalt not . . .'" on the one hand and "our congregation has voted to permit . . ." on the other?

It is precisely on this point that Conservative Judaism shows itself to be the most indigenously American of our three quasi-denominational perspectives. It fashioned a unique ideology of Judaism geared to the democratic, permissive, anti-authoritarian American scene. What is Solomon Schechter's doctrine of *klal yisrael*, the proclamation that decision-making in Judaism resides and has always resided among the people, if not a radical redefinition of the halakhic process in democratic terms? Halakhic decisions were more likely to be palatable to the American Jew if he could come to see them as the embodiment of the popular will, rather than as the decree of traditional or contemporary sages.

Similarly, what is Mordecai Kaplan's definition of Judaism as a civilization, but an accommodation of Jewish self-perception to the way that Americans in general tended to see themselves? Kaplan taught us that non-observant Jews were still validly Jewish as long as they saw themselves as members of the Jewish people, and saw the Jewish people as their vehicle of human self-fulfilment. Conservative Judaism led the way in teaching two generations of American Jews to see themselves less as a creedal system than as an ethnic group with a distinctive religious content, a definition with which one could be at home in an America that valued people over philosophy, and pragmatism over ideology. If there were philosophical flaws or inconsistencies in Schechter's or Kaplan's projections of Judaism, the defense was that they worked, unlike, say, Kohler's more systematic theology which remained bloodlessly abstract. Kohler and S.R. Hirsch and their writings, however learned, remained German; Schechter and Kaplan were more comfortably American.

For two generations now, we have lived with a view of ourselves as a community which was rooted in peoplehood and found its underlying "mythology" in the Holocaust and the State of Israel, historical rather than theological or halakhic fundamentals. I would venture to predict that that kind of Jewish self-perception has had its day, and is in the process of

change. It worked well for two generations. It permitted us to organize and build a community while overlooking differences of philosophical temperament. It guided us to rally to the support of Israel and reconstitute ourselves after the bloodletting of the Holocaust. But the American spiritual temper is changing, and so is American Judaism.

I see people asking questions which ethnic Judaism, the peoplehood-Judaism of my beloved teacher Mordecai Kaplan, is no longer geared to answer (as it once so well answered the questions that I was asking). They are asking questions about faith, about God, about moral values. Consensus and folkways are too thin a gruel to satisfy the spiritual hunger of a new generation. This is the result, in part, of the new inwardness of today's Americans. A generation ago, being religious meant marching for racial justice or against the war in Vietnam. Today it means being concerned with the development of your own spiritual capacities, learning to pray as well as to protest, finding a source of moral purpose to sustain you when you despair of putting an end to war and bigotry in your lifetime.

The nature of tomorrow's Judaism is being changed as well by a factor which no one could have predicted, and to which few students of the American Jewish community give proper weight. Every year, the Jewish people is enriched by the entry of several thousand converts, people who were not born Jews but choose to become Jews after a period of serious study and exposure. Studies, especially those of Steven Huberman, have confirmed the anecdotal experience of any Rabbi, that these Jews by choice are serious, committed people, typically more Jewishly observant than Jews by birth. Moreover, lacking the ethnic dimension of born Jews, they define their Jewishness in terms familiar to them from their Christian upbringing: prayer and ritual observance. By their numbers and sincerity, they are reshaping American Judaism into a less ethnic, more spiritual community.

If I were to venture to predict the future of American Judaism, I would foresee three streams, even as we have now, not because this tripartite division was in any way ordained at Sinai (if it had been, 75% of American Jews would feel free to reject it), but because it reflects the variety of temperament on the American scene. There would be:

Jews who obey, those who forego participation in the American mainstream and let Judaism define their lifestyle for them; Jews who confront, who decide after serious consideration of each issue how much room they will make for affirmations of Jewishness in their lives; and Jews who reject, who choose to forego a serious confrontation with the religious dimension of their tradition, who substitute ancestry for identity, and in an America in which ethnic identity is becoming less significant and less satisfying, may one day find themselves looking at their shrinking Jewishness and wondering what, if anything, is left of it.

Denominationalism and the American Experience – An Orthodox View

WALTER S. WURZBURGER

HISTORICALLY, THE AMERICAN ENVIRONMENT has been especially conducive to the development of ideologies which enabled Jews to identify as adherents of a particular religious denomination, rather than as members of an ethnic community. One need but point to the tremendous popularity of Will Herberg's thesis that Judaism represents one of the three "legitimate" versions of the American "civil religion" to realize the attractiveness of formulations which dissolve "Jewishness" into elements that could readily be fitted into a purely religious framework. The tripartite division of Judaism into three denominations (Orthodox, Conservative, Reform) made the scheme especially attractive because it seemed to reflect the pattern of the overall American civil religion which also was expressed in three different versions (Catholic, Protestant, Jew).

The flourishing of religious denominationalism was largely due to the wall of separation between Church and State that manifested itself in a policy of benign neutrality towards all religious groups. On the one hand, the anti-Establishment clause of the Constitution protected Jews from the various forms of religious discrimination to which they had been subjected in many other countries. On the other hand, the prevailing climate encouraged the practice of religion since the profession of *some* faith was deemed desirable for the proper functioning of the democratic value system. As President Eisenhower put it: "Our Government does not make sense, unless it is founded on a deeply felt religious faith, and I don't care what it is." Within such a cultural milieu, one had every reason to believe that religious commitment to Judaism was not only compatible with one's civic responsibilities, but actually enhanced one's Americanism. Many of us have time and again heard Rabbinic charges to Bar Mitzvah boys, admonishing them to become better Jews and better Americans — equating the process of becoming better Jews with that of becoming better Americans!

To be sure, Jewish denominationalism is not indigenous to the American scene. Its roots go back to the Napoleonic Sanhedrin which struggled to legitimize the entry of the Jew into the modern world by pretending that being Jewish exhausts itself in the profession of a private religious faith which in no way intrudes upon the public responsibilities of a citizen

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of a secular state to which the Jew, like all his fellow citizens of different religious persuasions, should be able to give his total loyalty. The attempt to eliminate completely all purely ethnic and nationalistic features from Jewish self-identification became even more pronounced in Germany, where one of the leading Jewish organizations deliberately shied away from using the term "Jewish." The very choice of the name *Zentral Verein Deutscher Staatsbürger des Mosaischen Glaubens* (Central Organization of German Citizens of Mosaic Faith) speaks for itself. Mosaic faith sounds so analogous to Christian faith. It manages to avoid all the nationalistic and ethnic overtones associated with the term "Jew." Classical Reform's opposition to Zionism was also grounded in the belief that Judaism in the modern era must divest itself of all ethnic features and transform itself into a pure religious denomination — a process that manifested itself in the growing Protestantization of the synagogue as well as of the rabbinate.

A variety of historic realities, especially the rise of Hitler and the trauma of the Holocaust, dispelled the myth that being Jewish could be regarded merely as a matter of voluntary religious identification. After all, the Nazis were hardly interested in matters of theological belief. Insofar as they were concerned, Jewishness was defined in purely biological terms.

On the American scene, the resurgence of ethnicism in the 60s, sparked by developments in the black community, gave further impetus to the growing awareness of the ethnic components that go into the makings of Jewish identity. But this resurgence of ethnicism was in no way regarded as a challenge by the various Jewish religious denominations. As a matter of fact, they had every reason to welcome it because commitment to "religious ethnicism," as Yehezkel Kaufman defines Judaism, enabled them to endorse even purely secular expressions of Jewish self-identification as a covert religious affirmation. Kinship and solidarity with Jews everywhere represents, for religious denominations, a fundamental religious imperative. It has been suggested, therefore, that notwithstanding all irreconcilable theological differences, there is a unity amidst diversity inasmuch as each and every Jewish religious denomination subscribes to the common core belief that the survival of the Jewish people is religiously mandated.

But it is highly questionable whether, in point of fact, commitment to Jewish survival need necessarily be a function of religious impulses. Obviously, numerous secular Jews are passionately committed to the cause of Jewish survival. Although some religionists maintain that any form of identification with the Jewish people is really a covert affirmation of the religious vocation of the Jew which masquerades under secular appearances, it is highly problematic whether such "religious imperialism" is really warranted. Shouldn't non-believers be entitled to have their assertions taken seriously at face value without imputing to them "real" opinions which contradict their stated views?

Since cultivation of a sense of unity among Jews need not necessarily be a function of religious commitment, there is no need to call for an artificial ecumenism among Jewish denominations. There is hardly any theological proposition that can be shared by an Orthodox believer in supernatural Revelation and a Reconstructionist naturalist. Christians may require an ecumenical movement in order to achieve a sense of unity on the basis of shared values and beliefs. But Jews are different. Their sense of solidarity and kinship with each other transcends the sense of unity of a community of believers who share a religious vision. Since Jews form a "community of fate," they need not fall back upon a common theological denominator in order to generate a common bond. Jewish unity rests upon ethnic rather than ecumenical factors. To cite a telling example, Rabbi Chaim of Brisk, a world renowned Rabbinic leader of Lithuanian Orthodoxy, once requested that the worshippers at a Kol Nidre service go home and return with ransom money needed to save the life of a Bundist who faced execution. Obviously, the beliefs of this radical Jew were totally incompatible with everything that Rabbi Chaim stood for, but such considerations were totally irrelevant when the life of a Jew was at stake. The sanctity of Yom Kippur had to yield to the overriding priority of saving a Jewish life — even that of an atheistic radical.

It is against this background that we can appreciate Orthodoxy's ambivalence towards non-Orthodox denominations. On the one hand, Jews are responsible for the material and spiritual welfare of their fellow Jews irrespective of their denominational affiliations. On the other hand, Orthodoxy cannot condone any deviation from *Halakhic* norms because, according to Orthodox tenets, the obligation to observe *Halakhic* norms is incumbent upon every Jew irrespective of personal preference or convictions.

To be sure, such insistence upon conformity to *Halakhic* standards clashes with prevailing notions of "religious pluralism" which go far beyond the rights of individuals to live in accordance with the dictates of their conscience. According to the tenets of religious pluralism that are currently in vogue, considerations of civility dictate that all religious denominations renounce any claim of superiority over competing belief systems. Underlying this conception of "religious tolerance" is the surrender of any notion of an objective religious truth. In this view, matters involving religious commitment of faith can possess only purely subjective validity. Since religious truth becomes totally relativized, what is "true" for one individual need not be "true" in relation to another individual.

Orthodoxy, however, cannot accept this canon of modernity. It unabashedly insists upon the communal character of Judaism and rejects the complete privatization of faith. For that matter, it cannot subscribe to the proposition that the individual human conscience serves as the final arbiter of religious truth. The preoccupation with authenticity and autonomy which is so characteristic of modernity is undoubtedly largely due

to the impact of Protestant categories of thought. Parenthetically, it should be noted that exclusive reliance upon autonomy ultimately developed into *anomie*, as reflected in such modern non-cognitive approaches to ethics as emotivism and prescriptivism.

Because Orthodoxy is committed to the authority of an objectively binding *Halakhah* it has been relatively successful, at least by comparison with other denominations, in resisting the inroads of the Protestantization of Jewish religious life. Moreover, Orthodoxy's insistence that all Jews are bound by *Halakhic* norms engenders a sense of unity which derives not from a consensus with respect to shared "essential" values, but from the belief that the Covenant at Sinai obligates every single member of the Jewish people. In the self-understanding of Orthodoxy, Jewish identity is not a matter of choice but a given. What is left to the discretion of the individual is the determination whether one's Jewish identity should be merely a matter of fate or of purposeful destiny. In the terms of Rabbi Soloveitchik, the task confronting the Jew is to transform a "community of fate" into a "community of faith."

To be sure, there are "ultra-Orthodox" elements who believe that total segregation from non-observant Jews is the best strategy for insuring the attainment of important religious objectives. But it must be borne in mind that this has nothing to do with excluding non-observant Jews from the fold. Even the most dogmatic and rigid follower of the *Neturei Karta* will agree that Jews form one people; they are not merely members of religious denominations. *K'lal Yisrael* is not an association of religious congregations but the organic community of all Jews who are "responsible for each other" — in spite of all the attempts to drive the wedge of polarization between them.

Tel-Aviv: Then and Now

MORDECAI ROSHWALD

1.

A TRAVELLER, RETURNING AFTER A FEW decades to a place he was intimately familiar with, is inevitably tempted to compare the memories of days past with the present reality. His judgment is likely to be affected by personal reminiscences and emotions. He may wax enthusiastic about the growth and development of the place, taking pride in the march of progress, or he may let nostalgia and selective memories idealize the past and belittle the present. His impressions will be colored by normative judgments: how beautiful it is now, or how good it was then. It will be extremely difficult for him to attempt an objective and unbiased analysis.

Fully realizing these difficulties, the present writer made the effort to compare and evaluate some of the striking differences between Tel-Aviv in the thirties and forties and the city today. To some extent the effort was made easier by the fact that during the intervening years he has made trips to the first all-Jewish city and the conclusions had time to become immune to startling impressions and to ripen, as it were.

Why is Tel-Aviv and not all of Israel the subject of this analysis? One reason for the limitation is the obvious hesitation at attempting sweeping generalizations that would take in the entire land and its people. Israel, however small, consists of various regions. There may be also a significant difference between the city and the country. Moreover, the different cities — notably the three major ones, Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv and Haifa — have each consistently exhibited peculiar characteristics and personality. In a sense, when one travels from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem, one almost experiences the sensation of travelling to another country.

Another reason for choosing Tel-Aviv is its dominant role in the history and present reality of Israel. Tel-Aviv was the first and largest Jewish city in mandatory Palestine, and today, joined with Yafo, forms a large conurbation — including municipalities north, east and south of the main city — which is the dominant population center of Israel. It has been, and remains, what people call a “dynamic” city — perhaps not an unequivocally laudable quality, but a characteristic which cannot be ignored. Moreover, as already mentioned, it was the first all-Jewish city in Eretz Israel and, thus, the first Hebrew city, the main center of Hebrew journalism, Hebrew theater, Hebrew publishing, of the living Hebrew culture in the process of its regeneration.

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Thus, Tel-Aviv is a significant part of Israel, an important aspect of the life of the country, a prominent expression of Israel's culture (culture meant here as the comprehensive way-of-life). Though not to be interchanged with the whole of Israel, it remains an important semi-representative of the nation.

2.

How does Tel-Aviv today compare with the city of its youth?

In a certain sense, especially when statistical data are concerned, the comparison is predominantly in favor of the present. The city and its surrounding communities have grown enormously. Tel-Aviv itself, bounded by the sea on its western side, has grown in four directions — north, east, south and upwards. The neighboring towns and agricultural settlements, like Ramat-Gan, Petah-Tiqva, Herzlia, Ra'anana, Holon, Bat-Yam, have expanded and become a part of a sprawling urban area.

The city today boasts large museums (there was just a small paintings gallery in the older days), big modern hotels, super-markets, an impressive university campus, some modern institutional buildings. There is a feeling of a large metropolitan center in Tel-Aviv — at least in the setting of a country the size of Israel.

The standard of living of the inhabitants of this conurbation has, by and large, risen considerably. If, in the earlier days, a middle-class family of four lived in a small rented apartment of two or three rooms and a kitchen, and a young couple often rented one room with kitchen privileges, today it is customary for couples, old and young, to own a condominium which is considerably larger. The furnishings have turned from elementary to indispensable to fancy and elegant. Cooking has shifted from dangerous, smelly and unreliable kerosene burners to gas or electric ranges and ovens. The ice-box, which was cooled by a piece of ice sold on the street and required replenishment every day or two during the long hot summer, was ousted by the electric refrigerator a long time ago. Other gadgets — sometimes of marginal usefulness — have been added to the domain of the homemaker. Modern transportation and communication equipment have become quite widespread: the private car, if not as common as in America, is now rather habitual; the telephone and especially the television set are even more so. One can point to changes in the standard of living also in other spheres of life — dress, food, entertainment.

However, as is well known, the quality of life cannot be judged and measured solely by the material standard of living, and a city, the place of a living human community, cannot be evaluated merely by its size and its buildings. It is in the more elusive aspects of social relations and the ways of life cultivated by the community that one can detect deterioration and decline in Tel-Aviv.

A prominent manifestation of that deterioration is the incidence of crimes of violence. While, in the older days, murder, robbery, and breaking-in were virtually unknown among Jews in the Land of Israel, that is not any more the situation. Crime — individual and organized — is a part of life now: indeed, there is even talk of an Israeli mafia in, and outside of, Israel. True, it is only a fringe of the society which bears direct responsibility for crime. Yet, the manifestation and dimensions of crime cannot be ignored as a symptom of a general social malaise, just as its absence could not be ignored as an indication of the health of the society at large.

Another worrisome phenomenon are the developments in the relationship between the sub-ethnic Jewish communities, which overlap with social class splittings. While the true picture of the sub-ethnic groups in Tel-Aviv, and Israel, is quite complex, there is a polarization, and a growing awareness of it, between the East and Central European old timers and the immigrants from Arab countries who arrived after the establishment of the State. A significant part of the latter and their descendants have not “made it” in Israel — economically, socially or culturally. They have turned into the “hewers of wood and drawers of water,” and some of them resent the situation and look with anger at their well-established Ashkenazi brethren who live in comparative luxury and seem to consider themselves a deserving aristocracy, even if they often proclaim socialistic ideals. In a historical paradox, it is all too often the one-time *haluzim* (pioneers) or their descendants who now form the socio-economic elite. Members of the “Mayflower” sector, from their own vantage point, tend to look at the “oriental communities” (as these are sometimes referred to) with an attitude ranging from benevolent condescension to open spite. The economic and social gap of social class overlaps and is strengthened by the differences in the daily way of life which are the consequences of the diverse cultural influences of the lands of origin of the two groups. Tension, sometimes manifested in unpleasant incidents, has become widespread and pervasive.

True, such inter-community tensions are not a novelty in Israel. Even in the days of the Mandate there was a less than perfect harmony between the Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews, between the East European and the Central European immigrants, between old timers and newcomers. However, these strains were conceived as — and usually were — of a temporary nature. They were regarded as a by-product of immigration, a phenomenon which was bound to wither away through the process of acculturation — notably with the help of the educational institutions where children of diverse origins were undergoing a speedy process of assimilation in the national melting-pot. In a matter of two-three years the youngsters, at least, were expected to become *sabras*, and by and large this usually happened. Today, even the real *sabras* of the “oriental” communities in certain quarters of greater Tel-Aviv (and some other cities in Israel)

remain in the ethnic-and-social-class category of their parents. The emergence of what seems a chronic social illness — ethnic differences and class gap within the community of Israeli Jews — cannot be ignored. The melting pot has given way to two different stews on two separate burners. The worst of the matter is that no solution to the problem is in sight, no effective steps are being taken to overcome this peculiar variety of drifting into two nations — a process with the potential of serious social trouble.

Another manifestation of decline — perhaps less obvious and more open to controversy — lies in the sphere of the aesthetics of the way-of-life. If one walks along the fashionable promenade of Tel-Aviv, down Dizengoff Street, one is struck by strange contrasts. Next to some of the new modern buildings of the Dizengoff Center, the houses look shabby, ugly and without any character. The street is lined with shops, restaurants and sidewalk cafés, a would-be Champs Elysées perhaps, but the attempts at elegance, including high prices, collide with the shabbiness of a noisy street filled in the evenings with milling crowds. The crowd is heterogeneous, but the mosaic does not make for an attractive picture — perhaps because of the nature of the components. There are young people, the girls often dressed in rather extravagant manner, ranging from phoney overalls and American jeans to wide baggy trousers made of light colorful fabric, modelled — it would seem — either on the fashion in a sheik's harem or on Hollywood's image thereof. Ostentatious dress is not limited to the young: middle-aged ladies, often quite corpulent, sit in the cafés in their expensive attire, anxious to show that they do not lag behind. In fact, the contrast created by the excess of flesh and the expensive dress makes the total appearance grotesque. The men, if over forty, all too often exhibit pot-bellies, overflowing above the tightly belted trousers. The general appearance of the two sexes exhibits a solid unhealthy appetite, and the street provides ample opportunity to supplement the regular meals at home.

Then, there are the names of the stores. Whereas in the young Tel-Aviv of several decades ago businessmen were anxious to call their establishments by Hebrew names, even to adapt biblical phrases to modern needs, the present trend is to find a foreign name. The first department store in Tel-Aviv was called *Hefzibah* (which means both, "I want her" and "What I wish can be found in the store"), an ingenious use of a Biblical phrase (2 Kings 21:1 and Isaiah 62:4), apparently suggested by the famed Hebrew poet, H.N. Bialik. A fashionable café in those early days was called *Gan Raveh*, another Biblical phrase (Isaiah 58:11 and Jeremiah 31:11), meaning "a well watered garden" and suggesting that the establishment would quench the thirst of its customers. Today one encounters foreign and hybrid, Hebrew-foreign, names — all transliterated into Hebrew. A shoe-store is called "Kickers," while clothing stores carry such names as "Alaska," "Lady Jane," "Disco Jeans," "Jeans Center," "Trip," "Hulzot Mister Tee" (Mr. T T-shirts), "Keif Bo Topper" (a com-

bination of American and Israeli slang, the phrase suggesting that the wearer of the topper will have a good time in it). Eating establishments exhibit a similar variety: "Derby Bar," "Blintzes Hungari" (Hungarian), "Pundak [Inn] Acapulco," "Steakiya Camp David" (offering steaks), "Burger Ranch," "Uncle Sam Hamburger," "MacDavid" (which is not the Scottish son of David, but the local variety of McDonald's). A dog-food supplier calls his enterprise *Dogli* (the equivalent of "I have a *kelev*"), the hybrid apparently appealing to the Americanized dog-owners. The Hebrew word for a store, *hanut*, is often replaced by *boutique*, in Hebrew letters. The fancy "Dizengoff Center" is transliterated as such into Hebrew, though there is a well-established Hebrew word for "center," namely *merkaz*.

One could quote many more examples of this tendency to imitate the foreign and prestigious at the expense of Hebrew, old or revived. The cultivation of one's own culture and customs is giving way to the import of pseudo-culture from the allegedly great centers of the modern world. The language — the Hebrew spoken, and often written, today — is debased under the impact of American English, on the one hand, and half-literate colloquialisms on the other hand. Language is, of course, a symptom of cultural transformation, and its degeneration corresponds to the regression in various spheres of life — in conversation, modes of entertainment, personal interests. The quality of life in these spheres has declined. The issue is too wide to allow elaboration and documentation in this framework, but the present writer believes that it could be shown that the Hebrew theatre today does not compare favorably with its predecessors in the thirties and forties, that there is less interest in lectures on theoretical themes, that cheap entertainment and flat conversation are much more dominant than they used to be in earlier days of the Hebrew city. The Hebrew language, in its present tendency to become a transliteration of a blend of words, phrases, concepts, ingathered from various lands, is a symptom of a flattening of the old-new culture, of Judaism ancient and reborn.

3.

It is tempting to speculate about the causes of this deterioration. Four major reasons can be pointed at: immigration, inflation, television and travel.

Immigration has been the life line of Israel since well before the establishment of the State. In this respect, it has been a more or less continuous factor affecting the Jewish community and its social and cultural life, besides building its demographic and political strength. However, immigration used to be linked to intensive and successful acculturation of the new immigrants. The massive immigration, largely from the Arab countries, during the first few years after the establishment of

the state was not properly assimilated into the established society, or, to be more exact, some significant parts of those immigrants and their children have not been acculturated. They form a chunk of a different culture, with different habits and ways of life, which stands apart and which confronts the established society. The social tension and perhaps some of the crimes of violence can be linked to this situation. A more gradual influx of immigrants around the middle of the century would have greatly contributed to a gradual melting of the mixture in the social-cultural pot. But, then, history cannot be changed retroactively, and the international circumstances at that time may not have left other options for the planners of immigration.

Inflation seems another source of the present situation. The rapid decline of the value of money, which has been endemic in Israel at least since the establishment of the State, has created the psychosis that money should be gotten rid of at any price. In the last few years this by-product of inflation may have been significantly curbed, because of the virtually automatic increases in salaries and savings according to the index of cost of living, but, before that, when no established ways secured the value of savings, there was virtually a panic of not keeping money but buying anything at any price, on the assumption that next month, or week, or day, things would cost more. This practice turned into a habit and the mentality of easy buying still lingers on. It is certainly one factor in the purchase of expensive clothing, of gadgets (necessary or not), of travelling abroad which, as will be explained further, affects the cultural deterioration too.

Perhaps the worst consequence of inflation — and this does not exclude the recent years of “indexed” inflation — is that it makes people devote a great part of their thought and energy to economic concerns. These range from decisions to buy food at cheaper outlets to speculation on the stock-market or an investment in a new apartment. The banks offer a variety of savings-plans, and it takes some expertise to decide which to choose for optimal earnings. Many savers become devout amateurs in this field. The overall result is that people’s hobbies, conversations, musings turn to these material objectives, all at the expense of loftier and intrinsically more interesting concerns of the mind. How can one read a book, or discuss literature, or be concerned with social issues, when one is consistently preoccupied with such problems as where to invest, what to sell and what to buy? Old and young, men and women, become addicts of money: how to keep its value, and, if possible, to increase the savings over and above the inflationary erosion. It seems that even politics, for long a primary concern in Israel, has given way to the economic game. This materialism — or, to use a more precise term, financialism — is diverting attention from society and culture, and thus allows other forces to affect it. The teachers, the educated and the cultured, who at one time were actively concerned about the language, the entertainment, the

quality of conversation, may have been drawn, to a great extent, into the vortex of financial affairs.

Then there is television, the provider of mass entertainment, which is affected by the mass demand. Television is a powerful competitor with the printed word and it vies with active and live conversation as a way of pastime. It also diffuses the entertainment of America and Europe, and not necessarily the best of the Western World. The other providers of culture, — say, the theater — have to compete with television by cheapening their art and playing up to the low common denominator. The imported programs do not contribute, by and large, either to the quality of entertainment or to the purity of the Hebrew language.

And, then, people travel. In the current year about one in every six Israelis has travelled abroad. It is these travels that bring the Babel of names to the Tel-Aviv retail businesses which clutter the streets of the one-time Hebrew city. It is these travels that perpetuate the dream of the “great world” through the nightmare of the transliterated words and phrases. Not that travel cannot be instructive: Tel-Aviv could learn from the London theater, from the architectural beauty of the Italian cities, from the cleanliness of Switzerland. But it takes a discriminating person to travel and to select. When travelling has become a mass movement and when many of the travellers are only partially observers and predominantly acquirers — for inflation has affected the mentality of the Israeli tourist — the travelling experience adds more to the material possessions than to the mental horizons. The world of material riches abroad becomes a continuous dream woven at the expense of the cultivation of the national way-of-life.

4.

The factors making for the cultural degeneration of Tel-Aviv, as suggested here, are present in other parts of Israel as well. If so, they should have brought about the same results, and there would be no point of making a distinction between Tel-Aviv, be it as a dominant megalopolis, and the rest of the country.

This, to some extent, may be true, and it could be said that Tel-Aviv represents, in a more intense manner, a tendency which is general. Yet, one must bear in mind that there are forces counter-acting the factors for cultural decline, and these forces are felt more strongly in places other than Tel-Aviv. There are agricultural settlements — whether *kibbutzim* or *moshavim* — where ideology and, perhaps, contact with nature provide an antidote to television and to foreign influences. There are religious communities in which the Jewish tradition provides a counter-weight. Perhaps the most visible example of counter-balancing forces is Jerusalem, where the city itself is a factor diminishing the impact of alien cultures and foreign influence, and even of inflation. The historical associations con-

nected with the city, its austere geographical setting, and the quest for absolute truths which various religions seek there, infuse the place with a peculiar *genius loci* which seems to have a salutary impact on its inhabitants even in their daily lives and aspirations.

Another point could be raised, indicating the presence of factors comparable to those pointed out in respect of Tel-Aviv in other urban centers of the Western World. There are “undigested” social sectors in New York and London. Inflation is not unknown in Europe and America, even if Israel has attained unhappy prominence in this field. The impact of television on the way of life in the United States has been unparalleled, and travel abroad has become universal in the developed nations.

All of this is true and, indeed, the presence of these factors has had its detrimental impact on the Western World. The incidence of crimes of violence in the United States is record-high and points to the serious social problems of American cities. Inter-racial friction in the United States and in England is expressed in more serious manifestations than in the case of the sub-ethnic tension in Israel. Cultural degeneration resulting from the mediocrity and vulgarity of television has been widespread in the Western World — notably in America. There is Americanization in Europe — even in France one encounters *le self-service*, or *le parking*.

All this, however, provides little consolation. For the Zionist ideal — in its social and cultural facets — did not aspire for the Jews to be like other nations, but to revive and develop the peculiar genius of Judaism which would become manifested in social relations and in the quality of cultural life. Indeed, some even dreamt that Israel would set an example to the world of a just and peaceful society, leading a highly cultured existence. These sanguine dreams are now clouded by a depressing reality, and there is no way of predicting how the future will look.

Neo-Nazism, Neo-Fascism, and Terrorism: A Global Trend?

JACK NUSAN PORTER

Introduction

THE LATE COMIC LENNY BRUCE ONCE DESCRIBED a Nazi rally as two Nazis and 500 Jews with all the Jews looking around wondering why there are so many of them there. The point is that we should not exaggerate the numbers or power of the anti-Semitic and racist groups in the United States and Canada. Over the Labor Day weekend in 1980 the American Nazi parties held a national conference in Raleigh, North Carolina and only 75 delegates from around the United States, Canada, and Europe attended. Five years ago, when I first began my research on neo-Nazis, they held a similar "party congress" in Milwaukee and then, too, only 75 showed up and these included a few wives and children. Their numbers have not grown by much since then.

Though the neo-Nazis parties are tiny, we can view right-wing groups as a series of concentric circles with the most respectable people in the center and the least reputable fanning outward. The center contains responsible conservative powers that dominate the Republican Party today, i.e., people like Ronald Reagan and William F. Buckley. They are not anti-Semitic, anti-Israel, or racist, though some of their policies do dovetail with the extreme right. In a circle around the Republicans might fall the "Moral Majority" of Rev. Jerry Falwell and similar groups. They, too, are not anti-Semitic (though some might quarrel with that) nor are they anti-Israel. In fact, they are among Israel's staunchest allies. Still, many liberal Jews are uncomfortable with both their evangelism and their conservative politics. Outside of them might fall the non-violent but extremely right-wing groups such as the New Christian Crusade Church, the Liberty Lobby, and perhaps the John Birch Society. Way, way out on the periphery are the very dangerous right-wing: the KKK, the Minutemen, the National Renaissance Party, the National States' Rights Party, and similar fringe groups. And even further out, in a deviant class all by themselves, are the neo-fascist motorcycle gangs, Waffen-SS groupies, and sexual and religious Aryan cults.

The point that I am making is that there is a continuum of conservative and right-wing thinking in this country. Some of it is very powerful but quite respectable in appearance; some of it quite weak (luckily) but extremely racist. While Lenny Bruce was correct in one way, George

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Santayana's aphorism must also be remembered. To paraphrase: those who forget the past will be doomed to relive it. Did not Hitler begin with small groups of disgruntled army veterans, motorcycle bums, and other cult followers and did he not eventually gain the support of the more respectable, more powerful military-industrial upper-class? There is a connection between the extremes of my concentric circles. The same economic, social, and political forces that elected a Republican president also contribute to the rise of right-wing, neo-fascist extremism. I will explain what I mean later in the article, but first I would like to detail some of the new trends that are taking place and while I do not have my baggage packed yet, there is cause for alarm.

New Alliances and Coalitions

A neo-Nazi paper, *The New Order*, published a front-page article proudly proclaiming that a "historic first" had taken place on April 19, 1980. The Ku Klux Klan, the National States' Rights Party, and the National Socialist (Nazi) Party of America had gathered in rural Johnston County, North Carolina (about 30 miles outside of Raleigh) for a public rally, complete with cross-burning. The occasion for this demonstration of "white racial unity" by three of the most prominent racist groups in the state was to show public support for the fourteen men on trial in Greensboro, North Carolina who were facing murder charges in the killings of several members of the Revolutionary Communist Party on November 3, 1979.

The neo-Nazis do not know their own history. This was not the first time that the KKK and the American Nazis have worked together in this nation's history. I have uncovered historical data that shows cordial relationships between these two groups as far back as the 1930s and 40s. In a book published in 1943 by John Roy Carlson called *Undercover: My Four Years in the Nazi Underworld of America*, there is a picture taken on August 18, 1940, on the grounds of the German Bund Camp Nordland, showing KKK leader Arthur Bell shaking hands with August Klapprott, vice-president of the German Bund (the American Nazis of that time). Right-wing leader Edward James Smyth engineered this joint Nazi-Klan meeting forty years ago.¹

A similar coalition was recently set free after a jury trial for the killings of five Communist members, including a Jewish doctor. Fourteen neo-Nazis and KKK members were charged with five counts of first degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder but were set free because the jury regarded communists as worse than fascists. This coalition is a serious matter because, in the recent past, American neo-Nazis have usually worked alone and, while the KKK and the Nazis both have similar political planks ("white power," a new social order, a deep hatred

1. John Roy Carlson, *Undercover* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1943).

of Communism, an abhorrence of Blacks and Jews, an Aryan Culture, an “unpolluted race,” strong centralized leadership, and a new social order), the emphasis on the Nazi uniform has caused rifts within both neo-Nazi groups and between Nazis and Klansmen. While I believe that the swastika and other Nazi regalia will continue to divide these two groups, history — both past and present — has shown that extremist groups can unite, given the right circumstances.

Another development is the increased relationship building among Nazis around the world. Delegations of neo-Nazi groups from Canada, England, and Belgium have come to the USA to meet with Nazi leaders and this situation should be watched since it points to the international roots of extremism. People in the “white world” (Western Europe, Canada, South Africa, Australia) are coming under increasing pressure from high energy bills, high taxes, and unemployment. They are fed-up with bilingual education, affirmative education, equal opportunity, unregulated immigration patterns, and the impotence of their countries’ foreign policies. They do not like Blacks, Arabs, Cubans, Iranians, Mexicans, Filipinos, “boat people” and Jews. They want easy answers to complex problems. The time is ripe for a world-wide resurgence of fascism. In periods of great economic and political stress, insecure people look for strong leadership, some great white hope who will magically transform their world into sweetness and light — white light.

Increased Political Sophistication

The KKK, the neo-Nazis, and the other extremists have discovered the power of the ballot box. Instead of marching around in white robes, brown shirts, or whatever costume they have on hand, they are becoming more sophisticated in style and tactics. One KKK leader, David Duke, summarized this change on TV with the pithy clarion call of “out of the cow pastures and into the hotel lobbies.” So, along with cross burnings and the goose-stepping, they have begun to run for office and to appear on radio, television, and in newspapers with their message. They have also increased their attempts at recruitment on army bases, in high schools and college campuses. Some examples:

- A neo-Nazi named Arthur Jones campaigned vigorously for mayor of Milwaukee in 1976 and won 5,000 votes in the primary against the popular liberal incumbent Henry Maier.
- In 1974, Jesse Stoner, chairman of the National States’ Rights Party, ran on a platform calling for the eradication of Blacks and Jews and came in fourth out of a field of ten candidates in the Georgia lieutenant governor’s race. He amassed 71,000 votes.
- Neo-Nazis have run for alderman in Chicago, for school boards in San Francisco and Milwaukee, for mayor of Houston, and for governor of Georgia.
- In August, 1980, Tom Metzger, a KKK leader and Nazi sympathizer, surprised political analysts and won the 43rd Congressional District in

Southern California, the most populous district in the United States. As the Democratic Party nominee, he faced the Republican incumbent, Claire Burgener. With fewer than 50 volunteers on his staff and less than \$10,000 in campaign contributions, he was defeated by Burgener who got 253,949 votes to Metzger's 35,107 (14%). Though expelled from the Democratic County Committee, Metzger is still a member of the Democratic State Committee.

- In Detroit, Gerald Carlson defeated the official Republican candidate in Michigan's 15th Congressional District to face the Democratic incumbent in the fall of 1980. The Michigan Republican Party was so embarrassed by this victory that it asked voters to vote for his Democratic opponent, William Ford. Carlson is a former member of the Ku Klux Klan, the John Birch Society, and the American Nazi Party and ran a campaign based on primarily a single issue: "white superiority" over Blacks and Jews. He lost to Ford but got 53,000 votes (32%) to 68% for Ford (who had won with 80% in 1976 and 75% in 1972).²
- On May 6, 1980, Harold Covington, one of the major leaders of the American Nazi Party, got 56,000 votes in the North Carolina Republican primary for State Attorney General. Campaigning with virtually no money and no neutral media coverage, he garnered 43% of the total vote and lost only narrowly.

Nazis and KKK members, including both men and women members, have been appearing recently on national network TV shows such as those of Tom Snyder, Phil Donohue, and Hour Magazine. They often polish their act so as to appear like any other political group, but under strenuous questioning from the host and audience the racism and violence come out into the open. Still, millions of people are exposed to at least some of the philosophy of these neo-fascist groups. I predict that, within a few years, a neo-Nazi or Klansman (or woman) will win election at a state level.

Intellectual Apologetics

One of the most outrageous developments in this sudden turn to the right has been the outcropping of fascism on college campuses and the legitimation of right-wing thinkers by eminent scholars and academics. Again, looking at history, this is not unique. The late Max Weinreich, in his 1946 book, *Hitler's Professors*, documented how German scholars, in conspiracy with German politicians and military, did their utmost to spread Nazi anti-Jewish theory and practice to the occupied and satellite nations and to any other country within their reach.³ In an essay in *Jewish Currents* (February 1978) Karen Sacks echoes that theme. She feels that a new *Rassenscience* has emerged in recent years. For example, among today's Social Darwinists, the Nobel Prize winner William Shockley advocates sterilization bonuses for poor Black women and, along with Professors Richard Herrnstein and Arthur R. Jensen, Shockley claims that

2. See *Jewish Currents*, (January 1981): 46.

3. Max Weinreich, *Hitler's Professors: The Part of Scholarship in Germany's Crimes Against the Jewish People* (New York: YIVO, 1946).

poor people are dumber than the rich and have more children; hence, allowing them to reproduce will lead to "genetic enslavement." While Shockley's work has been dismissed by geneticists and other scientists of the National Academy of Sciences as "unworthy of serious consideration," Richard Nixon's top scientific advisor, Edward David, supported Shockley and publicly berated the National Academy of Sciences for its stand. This "new eugenics" has serious genocidal implications.⁴

Equally alarming is the case of Noam Chomsky, Ferrari Ward Professor of Linguistics at MIT. Chomsky has recently written a preface to a book by a French historian, Robert Flaurisson, who claims that the Nazi gas chambers never existed and that the facts about the Holocaust and the number of victims have been grossly exaggerated. Flaurisson was dismissed from his post as professor at Lyons University in the wake of the scandal caused by one of his previous books on the subject. Chomsky states in his preface that while he does not share Flaurisson's views he does favor freedom of expression and claims that the controversy over this subject will help reveal the real truth and extent of Nazi atrocities in countries which were not subjected to Nazi occupation. Interestingly, Flaurisson is a member of a leftist group in France and his new book was published by a left-wing publishing firm close to the Trotskyist movement.⁵ Chomsky is, of course, also sympathetic to leftist views. It is ironic that these apologetics and the subsequent stamp of legitimacy come not from right-wing intellectuals but from the left.

These are not the only examples of academic support for neo-Nazi and neo-fascist views. Austin J. App, former associate professor of English at LaSalle College, Philadelphia, is the author of numerous neo-Nazi pamphlets, one, for example, called "Did Six Million Really Die? The Truth at Last." The French author, Paul Rassinier, a pioneer of this revisionist approach, speaks of "The Lie of Auschwitz." Northwestern University professor (of electrical engineering) Arthur Butz calls his book *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*, meaning the death camps and the extermination of millions of Jews among others. George Pape, president of the German-American Committee of Greater New York (a cultural organization with over 50 branches in the metropolitan area) objected to the introduction of teaching the Holocaust in the school system with the words: "There is no real proof that the Holocaust actually happened." Elie Wiesel has noted:

The Holocaust and its memory are now being assaulted, with increasing fury, in many quarters. . . . Why are the professors of history not speaking up in outrage? . . . Why hasn't the academic community boycotted Arthur Butz at Northwestern? Why haven't students walked out on him?⁶

4. Karen Sacks, "The New 'Rassenscience'", *Jewish Currents*, (February 1978): 4-12.

5. Edwin Eytan, "Chomsky Writes Preface to Book Denying Nazi Atrocity," *Jewish Advocate* [Boston], (December 18, 1980).

6. Elie Wiesel, "What Really Happened to Six Million Jews?", *Jewish Digest* (April 1978): 36-38. Originally appeared in the *London Jewish Chronicle*.

Terrorism: Left and Right

Over a decade ago, S.M. Lipset rightly analyzed the penchant of the extreme left and the extreme right for targeting similar terrorist attacks. What he wrote back then echoes strongly what seems to be happening today:

Although many conservatives (e.g. Barry Goldwater and some of the contributors to William Buckley's magazine *The National Review*) are now strongly pro-Israel, the extremist right, like the extremist left, remains very hostile, an attitude linked to their continued anti-Semitism. Thus, *The Thunderbolt*, the organ of the racist National States Rights party . . . supports "a strong Arab stand against the brutal aggression of Israel." Gerald L.K. Smith's *Cross and the Flag* repeatedly condemns Israel for crimes against the Arabs. The Italian neo-Fascists strongly back the Al Fatah and (like the New Left), reprint much of its propaganda. The fascist magazine *La Nation Européenne* also supports Al Fatah and advertizes its publications. The German National Democrats, in their paper, *Deutsche Nazional Zeitung*, take a similar pro-Arab terrorist line. I do not think it would be unfair to say that the revolutionary fascist right and the revolutionary communist left have similar positions with respect to Middle East conflict and the role of Al Fatah.⁷

My research has verified Prof. Lipset's conclusions but with some new wrinkles. American neo-Nazi and KKK publications and leaders continue to spout anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic rhetoric and have attempted a few feeble efforts at coalition-building with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). However, given the historic antipathy toward Communist and other socialist groups in the USA, I do not see such coalitions having much of a future here. However, on the matter of Israel, neo-fascist groups have attempted contact with the PLO.

For example, *The New Order* of September-October 1980, a neo-Nazi paper published in Lincoln, Nebraska, printed an article on the front page under the headline, "Nazis vs. Jews and Niggers," which stated that on July 9th (1980), the Chicago unit of the NSPA held a rally in Chicago's Daley Civic Center and that, prior to the rally, the NSPA (Nazi) Stormtroopers joined with members of the Palestine Liberation Organization in a march denouncing Israeli "imperialism and torture of the Palestinian people." The article noted that the Nazis were well-received by PLO members and that they promised to work together in the future. The article ended with:

For obvious reasons, the Jew-dominated news media were horrified at the idea of the two worst enemies of the Zionists joining together in a united front.

We will see more attempts by right-wing groups to smear Israel and blame it for America's problems. Thus, anti-Zionism will be coordinated

7. S.M. Lipset, "The Left, the Jews, and Israel" in his *Revolution and Counter-Revolution* (New York: Doubleday-Anchor Books, 1970), p. 398.

with, or at times mask, anti-Semitism. However, I have not uncovered *terrorist* coordination between KKK/neo-Nazi groups and the PLO but it could occur in the future. The situation in Europe is different. There, a great deal of terrorist activity has taken place in Italy, France, Germany, and Belgium and definite connections have been made between fascist groups and Arab terrorists.

Ironically, according to a report by Jacques de Vernisy in *Le Matin* (Paris), Palestinian terrorism, which used to preoccupy the police and security forces, is now regarded as only a peripheral part of this new wave. The report notes that while attacks are perpetrated by Palestinians, it is often as mercenaries and not in the service of the PLO! The same holds true for Libyans, Iraqis, and others. What we have is a situation whereby "free-lance" terrorists sell out to the highest bidder and are called in by any group that can afford their fees (as high as \$30,000 per month).

For example, in Antwerp, twenty-five year old Abdel Wahid tossed a grenade into a group of Jewish children preparing for a trip to camp, killing one and wounding seventeen. The next day an anonymous phone caller to the press agency, Belga, claimed responsibility in the name of the PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine). But the PFLP, from its headquarters in Beirut, immediately denied participation.

In Paris, the three men arrested for the unsuccessful assassination attempt on ex-Iranian leader, Shahpur Bakhtiar, claimed that they had acted on behalf of the PLO and that Yasser Arafat had personally ordered the liquidation of Bakhtiar. The PLO and Arafat denied responsibility. It is also possible that the infamous bombing that killed several people at the Synagogue in Rue Copernic in Paris may not have been carried out by neo-Nazis but by Arab terrorist mercenaries.

At the end of 1973, after the Yom Kippur War, the PLO realized that terrorist operations were detrimental to its cause and so it has turned more to diplomatic action. Even the infamous Black September, responsible for the 1972 massacre of Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympic Games, has been dissolved. Nevertheless, some Palestinians do not approve of this new diplomatic strategy and, after years of terrorist acts all over the world, they remain unable to change. They have therefore deserted the ranks of the PLO to put themselves at the service of others, either out of revolutionary friendship or out of financial interest.⁸

The scope of terrorism is beyond this short article and it is complex indeed. Soon after the Paris bombing, several reports stated that far-right and far-left terrorists might join forces. For example, *Newsweek* (Oct. 13, 1980)⁹ contained several shocking quotations from Italian intellectuals: Professor Paolo Signorelli, a radical rightist called for "the union of revolutionary forces from the left and right in a single popular move-

8. Jacques de Vernisy, "The New International Terrorism," *Jewish Digest* (January 1981): 3-7. Originally appeared in *Le Matin*.

9. John Brecher, "A Wave of Neo-Nazi Terror," *Newsweek*, (Oct. 13, 1980): 71.

ment.” And Mario Guido Naldi, editor of the right-wing journal, *Quex*, said, “You have to remember that a revolutionary is closer to us under any circumstances than a conservative.” An essay by Thomas Sheehan in the *New York Review of Books* (Jan. 22, 1981) discusses the rise of what he calls Eurofascism, and he mentions that two members of a highly militant neo-Nazi group in Germany, led by Karl-Heinz Hoffman and thirty other European fascists, were training in the Falangist camp at Aquaru, north-east of Beirut. Furthermore, Italian, French, and German neo-fascists are cooperating on terrorist activities and have been aided by mercenary Arab terrorists. All of these are shocking developments that need further verification.¹⁰

Cause and Effect: The Synergy of Left and Right

What accounts for this upsurge in fascism and terrorism from both the left and right — the Baader-Meinhof Group and Red Brigades on one hand and the KKK, European National Fasces, and neo-Nazis on the other? Events are running away from theory. Traditionally, sociological theory says that fascism attracts the unemployed, embittered white working class. But what explains the entrance of students, intellectuals, and the educated upper-middle class into right-wing extremism? The rise of both the left and the right is due to the tensions and frustrations of a society. Unstable economic conditions, inflation and recession, caused in great part by dependence on Third-World and Arab oil countries and the subsequent loss of power and prestige in world affairs, are among the major factors. The West must face the bitter truth that it is becoming increasingly impotent in relation to its political and economic crises. In fact, many people are even tired of “crises.” They want to see a return to a Wilsonian approach in foreign policy wherein the United States will once again be the great teacher to the wayward world. This can lead to two results: hawkish militant assertion of America’s power or a more difficult, diplomatic accommodation to the new realities. Many Westerners are unable to cope with the latter. They see diplomacy and accommodation as appeasement, as a sign of weakness. They look to strong leadership and a return to simple answers, thus setting the stage for both conservatism and its more extreme brothers-in-law — fascism, neo-Nazism, racism, and anti-Semitism.

Prof. Gregory Winn, of the University of Southern California, has written a fascinating paper analyzing the drift towards alienation and, for some, towards terrorism among young West German students.¹¹ His conclusions bear repeating not only to explain left-wing activities among

10. Thomas Sheehan, “Italy: Terror on the Right”, *The New York Review of Books* (January 22, 1981): 23.

11. Gregory F.T. Winn, “Terrorism, Alienation, and German Society,” paper presented at the Third Annual Meeting of the International Society of Political Psychology (Boston, Mass.) June 4–7, 1980.

German young people but right-wing ones as well. Why and how any person moves in a left-or right-wing direction are complex and difficult questions, but what makes them even more difficult is that the same factors that drive a person to become a member of the Red Brigade can also lead him/her to join the neo-Nazis. The fact is that we have a world of over-educated, under-employed young people and during economic crises that is an explosive combination. Prof. Winn has two main categories — societal and ideological factors that can lead to terrorism.

A. *Societal Factors*

1. Contempt for the “consumer society” and the welfare state and its rejection *because* of its prosperity and political success.

2. An effort to force democratic societies to crack down harshly on dissent, thereby further alienating leftist and moderate sympathizers. This would bring about a more fascist state — which is democracy’s “true colors” anyway. This cynical approach, held by some leftists, hopes to hand the state over to the waiting arms of the right-wing. After this move is effectuated, there will come a “true” proletarian revolution.

3. Frustration resulting from lack of job opportunities and over-education of its students, resulting in not only loss of jobs but of dissatisfaction with available jobs.

4. Frustration with a society that is overly taxed, formally rigid, and overly-regulated.

5. Disillusionment with a society because of the corruption of its political leaders, the similarity of party policies, and bugging/surveillance scandals.

6. Alienation and frustration from “achievement pressures” in the society. The greater pressure to achieve starts young, and has led to tremendous increases in maladaptive behavior — suicide, drug and alcohol abuse, psychiatric breakdowns, and cultism.

7. One could also add — anger directed at Black, Oriental, and Third-World immigrants (who are often better targets than Jews). These people are seen as a threat to jobs when, ironically, they were brought to the country to take menial or dangerous jobs that local citizens did not want. In the United States, these immigrants could be Cubans, Mexicans, or Vietnamese; in France, they would be Africans, Algerians, and other Arabs; in England, they might be Pakistanis, Indians, and Africans. Throughout Europe, there is antipathy to Turkish, Yugoslavian, Greek, and Italian *gastarbeiter* and it has led to government restrictions on civil liberties and immigration in both America and Europe.

B. *Ideological and Psychological Factors*

1. A playing out of nihilistic, anarchistic theories best typified by Bakunin for leftist terrorists or mythic, compulsive, authoritarian theories best typified by Spengler and D’Annunzio.

2. A link between idealism, romanticism and terrorism, inspired by a deeply imagined and romantic view of the ideal society. For neo-Nazis, this would be an Aryan society peopled by strong, lean, blue-eyed men and women; for leftists, a society of strong working class heroic peasants and workers. In both cases, it is a society ruled by the powerful and survived by the most violent.

3. Terrorist violence is based on purely criminal instincts without any reference to any form of revolutionary theory or strategy. As of now, this terror has been mainly from the left (PLO, Baader-Meinhof, Red Brigades, IRA, Weathermen, Symbionese Army, Red Guards) but, today, right-wing "counter-revolutionary" violence has appeared and will prove even more dangerous.

4. Family alienation and rejection of paternalistic authoritarianism (by leftists) and rejection of paternalistic liberals and welfare statists (by rightists and leftists).

5. A lack of individual purpose (anomie) compounded by *boredom*, especially in democratic, permissive societies.

6. A natural urge to express violence as a means of ridding oneself of suppressed feelings of impotence.

7. And last, the fear of simply being an "ordinary" citizen without identity, a cog in the machine of mass society, a blob in the gray, mundane welfare state. The desire is to achieve something, anything, even violently, in order not to be seen as a "nothing." This last theory could help explain not only left-right terrorism but such disparate acts as the Jonestown deaths (and other cults), the killing of John Lennon, and the hijacking of planes and buses.

Conclusions

While all of these terrorist groups are small in number, they are dangerous for two reasons. First, they can inflict a great deal of damage, greatly out of proportion to their numbers. But most important, they can (and this is often their intent) push the government to take steps to counter the violence. This can lead to police-state tactics and the abuse of civil liberties. Thus, all citizens suffer because of the acts of a few. Make no mistake about it. The true enemy of both left and right fascists is the moderate center. The true target is democracy. The acting out of violence is an utter gasp of futility and pain. Terrorism is the act of the impotent, not of the strong; the imprisoned, not the liberated; the frustrated, not the integrated. It is simply theater, a means of attracting attention.

What can we do? First, as distasteful as it may seem, one thing we can do is to listen to the demands and try to change what can responsibly be changed. While the tactics of terror speak for few, the ideology and politics behind the terror may speak for millions. We must listen to the voice of terror. At the same time, we must support strong anti-terrorist

laws, and we must train strong anti-terrorist police forces. To understand the terrorists best, we must put ourselves into their minds and think like them. That, the experts tell us, is the only way to understand them. We must also protect precious democratic freedoms despite the provocation. If governments give way to police states in order to catch terrorists, they will hand the terrorists a victory. Most of all, we have to attack the unglamorous conditions that breed terrorism: unemployment, racism, poor housing, discrimination, etc. . . . the unfinished agenda of the Johnson and Kennedy years. It is difficult simultaneously to root out terrorism and to uphold freedom and justice, but both must be on our agenda. We have no choice.

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Bellow, Malamud, Roth and Styron? or One Jewish Writer's Response

IRVING S. SAPOSNIK

WHILE WILLIAM STYRON'S PLACE IN MODERN American literature seems well assured, his place in company with the Holy Trinity of Jewish American letters seems less certain. He may, in fact, be as uncomfortable in their company as young Stingo, his narrator in *Sophie's Choice*, is "wandering amid the Kingdom of the Jews." Yet Styron, like his Jewish American literary colleagues, has entered into the business of inventing the fictive Jew, and if he has not been as prolific as they, nor perhaps as profound, he has nonetheless created three characters who are undeniable Jewish Americans. Harry Miller (*Lie Down in Darkness* — 1951), Al Mannix (*The Long March* — 1952), and Nathan Landau (*Sophie's Choice* — 1979) are the Jewish American characters of a displaced Southern writer, and they serve, as it were, as his entree into his adopted country.¹ A Connecticut homeowner rather than the Virginia peanut farmer he might have been, Styron has chosen to write novels in which his Southern background and its influence is but a fragment of an older America, and even as he has chosen to transplant himself up north, so, too, have his fiction and its characters become embedded, and sometimes entrapped, in what Saul Bellow calls "the great mysterious book of urban America."

Like the Jewish American writers, Styron writes and rewrites the book of urban America, and fills it with great mystery. Peyton Loftis, like Stingo a displaced Southerner in a foreboding, cavernous New York, leaps to her death at the end of her tortured soliloquy, a victim of Southern decay and Northern indifference; while Sophie Zawistowski survives the Holocaust only to choose death over life, urban torment and dissolution instead of the promised redemption of a Virginia homestead. Styron's characters are either of the city, and display all the scars that urban flesh is heir to, or come to the city with great expectations, only to see those expectations, and sometimes their lives, diminished or destroyed. Only Stingo escapes, though not entirely unscathed, from the urban wasteland, but he, after all, is William Styron, or at least his persona, who cannot afford to be trapped in the city and still write about it. Like

1. All citations from Styron's novels are to: *Lie Down in Darkness* (New York: Random House, 1951), *The Long March* (New York: Vintage, 1952), and *Sophie's Choice* (New York: Random House, 1979). Citations from Malamud are to: *The Assistant* (New York: Signet, 1957), and *Dubin's Lives* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1979).

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Melville's Ishmael, to whom he has at least once been compared, he is both witness and participant, and he must be saved so that he may tell his tale.²

Styron's fascination with Jewish America is not confined to his fiction, though that is its central location. In an interview with Phillip Rahv, he comments on the rivalry between Southern and Jewish American fiction, and remembers "the grim days when I began to realize that the tradition from which my own writing derived was no longer the hottest thing around."³ The hottest thing around is now the Jews, and Styron's founding fathers — Faulkner, Warren, Wolfe — are replaced by a new hegemony, a rising constellation that, in Marvin Mudrick's familial metaphor, may be compared to the three sons of an aging Hebrew patriarch:

Bernard . . . a pillar of the synagogue, rather prosaic maybe but steady and reliable, his father's son; then Saul, irresistible talker, promoter, last of the big-time spenders, flashy, wilful, hypnotically charming, bottomlessly cynical and sad, home only for the high holidays when he puts on the skullcap and a pious face for services; finally Phillip, nervous, vulnerable, the doomed and delicate one, least committed to the past and most troubled by the future, whom all the family fusses over and is apprehensively fond of.⁴

Styron's desire to join this family is barely concealed, if only as an adopted son, and there are moments in his fiction when the presence of his Jewish characters can be explained only by his "unconscious urge to be among Jews."

Styron's interest in Jewish America is, of course, more than a knee-jerk response, more than a if-you-can't-beat-them-join-them impulse. As he observes in *Sophie's Choice*, his Southern background, learning and sensibility condition a warm response to Jews and he even invents a Jewish first-love for Stingo (some of my best girl friends were . . .). Having chosen to write a new Southern novel which is no longer about the South, Styron looks to the Jewish American writers to provide an irrefutable model for the non-Jewish writer, for they, above all, have caught the mood of a changing America, "from the pastoral, small-town life style to the urban equivalent with its weird and singular frights and tensions;" they, above all, have provided "that comic awareness so exquisitely poised between hilarity and anguish which seems the perfect literary foil for the monstrousness of life in the big cities" (Rahv interview, p. 502).

And what of the Jews and their response to this would-be Member of the Tribe? Norman Mailer's running argument with Styron is the best known and the most truculent. Others have been more reticent, at least until the publication of *Sophie's Choice*, although several years ago C.C.

2. See Alvin H. Rosenfeld, "The Holocaust According to William Styron," *Midstream*, XXV, No. 10 (December, 1979): 43-49.

3. "The Editor Interviews William Styron," *Modern Occasions*, I, No. 4, (Fall, 1971): 501-510.

4. Marvin Mudrick, "Malamud, Bellow, and Roth," in *On Culture and Literature* (New York: Horizon Press, 1970), p. 200.

Walcutt, who is not Jewish, accused Styron of gathering “all his forces to dramatize an idea about the Jewish character” that Walcutt found distasteful. Styron’s Mannix is, for Walcutt, the embodiment of a facile Jewish stereotype, the victim who thrives upon humiliations because “they satisfy his arrogant need to suffer horror upon horror in order to express the enormity of his resentment against the oppressor.”⁵

Walcutt’s objections, though overstated, are well taken, for all of Styron’s Jewish American characters have about them the aura of victimization as well as “the unique, wrenched comic cry of the Jew” (Rahv interview, p. 502). Styron has written these two features into his Jewish American characters — the tragic victim as comedian — ostensibly because these are the two salient characteristics that he observes in both fictional and factual Jews (some of my best friends are victims who laugh . . .). And yet who can blame Styron for reading his Jewish American fiction the way most of us have? Who can blame him for perpetuating a role-model which the Jewish American writers have capitalized on? Why blame the guy for Jewish mistakes?

Ever since its discovered renaissance after the second world war, Jewish American fiction has been read as a tribute to glorified passivity, and Malamud, above all, has been praised (and only sometimes faintly damned) as the leading exponent of redemptive suffering. Each man suffers for the other, even as each man assists the other, according to Morris Bober, Yakov Bok, Feliks Levitansky and other well-known Malamudian spokesmen. And even though Malamud has increasingly repudiated such an over-simplified and sentimental reading, and even though Bellow and Roth have both questioned the rewards of suffering — “Is this the Jewish suffering I used to hear so much about? Is this what has come down to me from the pogroms and persecutions? from the mockery and abuse bestowed by the *goyim* over these two thousand lovely years?” (Portnoy) — old readings neither die nor fade away.

Yet, as early as 1947, Bellow wrote a novel whose very title forced examination of the dubious honor that victimization confers. In *The Victim*, both Asa Leventhal and Kirby Allbee are responsible for whatever suffering they inflict on one another and both, therefore, share the identity that their actions produce. Archetypal WASP (Allbee) and second generation Jewish American (Leventhal) are engaged in a personal and social conflict as severe as the conflict between black man and Jew that Malamud presents in *The Tenants* (1971), and they both remain as much victims of their mutual conflict as of the forces that reduce them to eternal outsiders, always in need of someone to show them to their designated place. Victim and victimizer become doubles and exchange roles, glaring alter egos whose motives and actions are strikingly similar: a brave book to

5. Charles Child Walcutt, *Man’s Changing Mask: Modes and Methods of Characterization in Fiction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966), p. 254.

write so soon after the Holocaust. By 1964, Herzog's reflections on suffering only make the point stronger: "the advocacy and praise of suffering takes us in the wrong direction and those of us who remain loyal to civilization must not go for it."

What was explicit from the beginning in Bellow's and Roth's fiction has become increasingly so in Malamud's. As the presumed voice of eternal suffering, Malamud has often been read as if he were now the same writer that he was in the fifties and, when changes have occurred in his fiction, they are often dismissed with a passing nod or a slight touch of annoyance. Yet the Malamud of *Dubin's Lives* is not writing the same kind of fiction that he did in *The Assistant*, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that what was submerged in 1957 has, in 1979, come to the intelligible surface. For Malamud's fiction has undergone an undeniable sea-change. Ten years after *The Assistant*, Yakov Bok concludes that "what suffering has taught me is the uselessness of suffering," while if Harry Lesser and Willie Spearmint suffer for each other, they do so only in their mutual destruction.

Even *The Assistant* contains more doubt than we have realized, a serious questioning of the value of Morris Bober's martyred life. It is not by chance that Malamud follows the rabbi's eulogy with Helen's silent reflection on her father's self-sacrifice:

I said Papa was honest but what was the good of such honesty if he couldn't exist in this world? . . . And he couldn't hold on to those things that he worked so hard to get. . . . People liked him, but who can admire a man passing his life in such a store? He buried himself in it; he didn't have the imagination to know what he was missing. He made himself a victim. He could, with a little more courage, have been more than he was (p. 180).

Helen's words are a necessary rejoinder to the rabbi's maudlin reading of Morris' life, and indeed to all of Malamud's fiction. That fiction contains a greater toughness than we have allowed, and if its roots are in Yiddish literature, as some have maintained, then its voice is the voice of Peretz who laughs with ironic laughter at the passive saintliness of the Bontshas and the Bobers of this world, for whom a roll and butter or a roll for the Poilisheh is its own sufficient reward.

In Malamud's recent fiction, those who serve are not only those who wait. In *Dubin's Lives*, he puts to rest the notion that waiting is all. William Dubin, noted biographer and resident Lawrentian, bursts from the restraints of his repressed sexuality to seek freedom and regeneration in the youthfulness of his twentyish mistress, Fanny Bick. And when, after the mandatory Malamudian penance of *coitus interruptus* and feared impotence he is finally able to love both his wife and his mistress, his life and his book reach their fitting climax. But it is not in sex alone that Dubin finds his just reward, nor is his story merely a tale of concupiscence fulfilled. Dubin's life is rather a life in marked contrast to his father's, who by profession and inclination was a waiter. Dubin remembers "his father,

who had waited all his years for life to catch up with him. He was waiting when he died. He died waiting" (p. 66). William, his son, is tired of waiting, of living other men's lives and not his own. With *Dubin's Lives* Malamud's fiction comes full circle: in *The Assistant*, metaphorical son and father change roles and become one in act and spirit; here Dubin denies his father's life as appropriate for him. While Frank nurses his circumcised penis in painful inspiration, Dubin carries "his half-stiffened phallus in his hand, for his wife with love."⁶

Like William Dubin, Bellow's Charley Citrine (*Humboldt's Gift*) and Roth's Nathan Zuckerman (*The Ghost Writer*) would seem to have freed themselves, if only temporarily, from their urban and ethical confinement. No longer are Malamud's characters trapped in their womb-tomb, no longer do Bellow's characters seek regimentation nor the pastoral isolation of run-down manses, no longer are Roth's characters metamorphosed into breasts or screaming thirty year old adolescents. In these three recent novels, Jewish American fiction may very well have begun to leave the world of its fathers and proceed apace to stand on its own, albeit shakily.

Styron, on the other hand, only a sometime member of the tribe, is perhaps still too mesmerized by the older forms of Jewish American fiction, too much inclined to use what has seemingly become a tired cliché. At least his three Jewish American characters would suggest that he has so far skimmed the surface without yet penetrating the shady undergrowth. Harry Miller, the New York artist whom Peyton marries to escape from her family, is perhaps too much the antithesis of Peyton's world, too much the solid, sincere, dedicated Jewish American husband, who tries to save Peyton from herself and fails. Al Mannix, for all his rebelliousness, is perhaps too willing to play the martyr. And Nathan Landau, witty, comic, mimic-buffoon, is perhaps too much a Lenny Bruce, whose jokes create more tears than laughter.

Yet with all his limitations, Styron provides as interesting and stimulating a portrait of the Jewish American as any non-Jewish American writer. Jews in general have not fared well in American fiction, nor have non-Jewish American writers succeeded when, like John Updike, they attempted to write their own Jewish American novel. Despite his handicap, Styron has seemingly done better by the Jews than by the blacks, for, at least until now, none of his Jewish American characters has

6. For a new and fresh reading of Malamud's fiction see Mark Shechner, "The Return of the Repressed," *The Nation*, No. 10 (March 17, 1979): 277-279. "What has gone unnoticed in the rush to sanctify Malamud is that the very system of values for which he is acclaimed has been, from the start, marked by discrepancies — contradictions between his celebrated pleas for restraint and certain powerful emotional promptings — and that those contradictions have been steadily growing sharper. In early books they appeared as mere matters of dramatic conflict . . . but more recently those discrepancies between the emotional tenor of his books and their instructional premises have become too extreme for patching up, and have threatened to fracture the Malamudian universe altogether" (p. 277).

sparked the enraged reactions post Nat Turner. If at times all too typical, Styron's Jewish American characters nonetheless offer more than a glimpse of significant recognition. In each of the three novels, with increasing complexity, Styron succeeds in developing his Jewish American characters until, with Nathan Landau, they dominate the novel almost as much as the title character. More than Harry Miller and Al Mannis, Nathan Landau is urban man epitomized, joking his way through the city until he can joke no more, pretending to be anyone else until he can no longer escape himself.

In 1951, however, Styron was seemingly not ready to allow his Jewish American characters equal billing. Harry Miller is a late arrival in *Lie Down in Darkness* and, like the black characters in the novel, provides a contrast to the Southern decadence represented by the Loftis family. He appears first at his wedding to Peyton, and is immediately characterized in somewhat typical terms: nice, honest, a 4F painter with

a Jewish face, all right, dark and almost handsome, with eyes that looked as if they rarely condemned, or, on the other hand, ever indulged themselves in factitious pity, and there was a deep, oddly patient, waiting quality about them which chiefly seemed to express a desire just to understand (p. 282).

While all around him are becoming increasingly drunk, particularly Peyton and her father, Harry stands apart (Jews aren't drinkers), content to observe but not indulge. The classic outsider, he has come south only to marry Peyton and then take her away, and, indeed, immediately after the wedding they leave on their honeymoon, a brief idyll before her several infidelities and eventual suicide. Promising love, Harry is offered only need in return; solid and true, he is unable to respond to his wife's growing instability. For all his solidity, he cannot cope with Peyton's desperate needs; with all his love, he finally stands aside as he did at the wedding, while Peyton jumps to her funeral.

By the end of the novel, both Peyton and the marriage have fallen apart, and Harry, as all else in her life, is at the center of a memory turned to nostalgia. In her final monologue, Peyton pursues a quest of Harry amid a loss of self, out of the urban wasteland back to an older world before time and age. Alone and drowning (a word which dominates her soliloquy), she crawls toward Harry in desperate need of comfort, only to be once again denied. For, like many a good Jewish boy, Harry demands what he can give: fidelity, trust, responsibility; and, like many a Southern girl, Peyton cannot give what she has never been given. Unable to understand the woman who was his wife, Harry is yet able to understand the woman whose anguish is universal.

I don't know what good it'll do anyone but me, but I want to paint and paint and paint because I think some agony is upon us, (he declares to Peyton in their final meeting, and so he paints, as expected), an ancient monk or a rabbi lined and weathered, lifting proud, tragic eyes toward heaven; behind him were the ruins of a city, shattered, devastated, crumbled piles of con-

crete and stone that glowed from some half-hidden, rusty light, like the earth's last waning dusk. It was a landscape dead and forlorn yet retentive of some glowing, vagrant majesty, and against it the old man's eyes looked proudly upward, toward God perhaps, or perhaps just the dying sun (p. 374).

Because of Peyton, or despite her, Harry celebrates the ruins of the city: Jerusalem, New York, megalopolis. While Peyton leaps to her death, Harry has already transformed her life into art.

Harry Miller is the first of Styron's Jewish American characters to prove ineffectual. It is not that others in the novel succeed more than he, but he tries so hard and fails so grandly. Like the rabbi whom he paints, he looks beyond the ruins to a presumed order, hopeful in his helplessness. But if Harry is the saintly rabbi, then Al Mannix is the martyred Christ (his favorite expletive is "Jesus"), replete with stigmata, rebelling not only against the enforced thirty-six mile march through which he must lead his men, but against the entire Marine Corps and institutionalism in general. As Styron singles him out, he is the physical and spiritual opposite of his friend Culver, Styron's Stingo in this novel as Mannix is his Nathan Landau, a noisy, boisterous, big-bear-of-a-man urban Jew who is constantly in opposition. Most often, this opposition is expressed in his "disgruntled sense of humor," an ability to laugh at himself and others which becomes infectious and salutary. But, typically, it is a sense of humor that disguises, only barely at times, a deep-seated frustration, for Mannix's physical bulk belies an inner weakness. For all his imposing stature, Mannix can resist only verbally; he can do nothing to forestall the gruelling march except endure it. And endure it he does; barking commands, encouraging his men to continue, using his gifted mouth (Oh, what a pisk, says Ma Portnoy) and the craft of words to keep him going. As Harry paints, Mannix talks, and both dangle this side of the apocalypse.

Yet, if Mannix is as ineffectual as Harry Miller, he is at least more good-humored (though admittedly it is a talent that we must accept on faith). Disgruntled as his sense of humor may be, it is, nonetheless, a necessary restorative, enabling both himself and others to survive the destructive idiocy of the military mind. In fact, it is the only restorative in a world of aimless death, the necessary balance between sanity and madness, and Culver, with Mannix's help, learns to grin-and-bear-it instead of puking up his guts. Even at the end, when the march has become a bitter memory, Mannix can laugh at his physical and emotional wounds. Like any good comic, he accepts the given, even if it be painful. Standing naked and alone, he both laughs and cries at his predicament. "Do it hurt? Deed it does."

Compared to Nathan Landau, and even to Harry Miller, Al Mannix is a brief hint, a scarcely-completed character in a novel only slightly longer than a short story. Despite his dominance, he seems only partially realized, only the beginning of what might have been, and should have been, a

more developed character. Yet, one might ask, what is he doing in the novel at all and, more particularly, why is he Jewish? His Jewishness, in fact, seems to be a product of his underdevelopment. By making him Jewish, Styron seems to be using a cultural shorthand, an ethnic identification that insures an *a priori* acceptance of his humor and his rebelliousness. Jewishness is not only an identification but a summation, and thus it serves both to expand and limit Mannix's character. In a novel of short strokes and broad symbols, Mannix could probably not be any more than he is. Yet one always hopes for more while accepting the given. "Do it hurt? Deed it does."

Harry Miller's art, Al Mannix's disgruntled comedy, and finally Nathan Landau's unstoppable spritz; each is a part of the composite that is Styron's Jewish America. Would Nathan have been without the others? In a novel that is ostensibly about Sophie Zawistowski and the choices that she is forced to make pre-and post-Auschwitz, Nathan assumes a strangely central position as her lover and eventual destroyer. As Styron's Jewish Nat Turner, he is a rebel with many causes, releasing his energies in physical and fantasized sexuality — Stingo's first notice of Sophie and Nathan is when the ceiling reverberates with their lovemaking — shooting up to escape his urban blues, sublimating all in a manic tirade against an invisible establishment. A comic dynamo, a non-stop talker and mimic, a running-gag man whose mouth is his art, he is Styron's best-realized Jewish American, as experienced as Stingo is innocent, as extrovert as Sophie is withdrawn. Yet though his art is long, his life is short; though his jokes are funny, his laughter is forced; though he is a comic by choice, he is a clown by necessity.

Sophie's Choice, like all of Styron's novels, is about a world of "disorder, defeat, despair" in which his characters search for "love, joy, hope — qualities which, as in the act of life itself, are best when they have to be struggled for, and are not commonly come by with much ease," and Nathan Landau, as much if not more than Sophie and Stingo, exemplifies this necessary and ultimately tragic struggle.⁷ A man of intense passion and commanding presence, he wastes all in an expense of shame, and destroys both himself and his friends in acts of determined destruction. For all his vitality, he is the novel's death-force, even as Stingo represents life, and when Stingo enjoins Sophie to choose him over Nathan, he makes the comparison explicit: "Nathan's out of your life now, gone for good. That death-force is gone, finished, kaput. So now love me, Sophie. Love me. Love *me*. Love life!" (p. 349). Never before have any of Styron's Jewish Americans been as compelling; never before have they failed as tragically. For all his bluster, Nathan only reaffirms what Styron indicates is a central condition of his fiction: that "all ages are tragic, that heroism is always succeeded by tragic outcome, and that this is the human condition."⁸

7. See Styron's "Letters to an Editor," *Paris Review* 1 (Spring, 1953): 13.

8. Robert K. Morris, "An Interview with William Styron," in *The Achievement of William Styron*,

As Styron's quintessential urban Jew, Nathan is likewise Bellow's Augie whose character is his fate, Malamud's Frank in search of the better self, and Roth's Portnoy in pursuit of sexual release. More than Styron's other Jewish American characters, he is an amalgam of the fictional and factual Jewish American, but while he may be larger than life, he is ultimately as limited and as much a failure as his predecessors. For all his bluster, he is little more than a voice, and Styron's description of Nathan in the early stages of writing the novel as "deranged, and certainly a fanatic, troubled, probably schizophrenic" is not as reductive as it might have been were he better realized.⁹ Nathan is like the novel in which he figures so prominently, a grand pastiche of seemingly-diverse elements: the survival and subsequent guilt of a Holocaust victim; the sexual initiation and eventual resurrection of a young Southern would-be writer who grows up to be William Styron; and the tragic self-destruction of the classic Jewish American paranoid, Lenny Bruce and Delmore Schwartz, with a touch of Leslie Fiedler.

At times, Nathan's story seem the most extraneous, as incongruous as Harry's and Mannix's Jewishness; at other times it seems to be the necessary complement to Stingo's *Bildungsroman*. On the surface, Nathan would seem to be everything that Stingo is not; sexually experienced, professionally successful, knowledgeable about all matters intellectual. And, indeed, at the beginning of their relationship, Stingo models himself on Nathan as the brother he never had, and looks to him for personal and literary advice (as Styron modelled his fiction on the Jewish American writers). But Nathan greatly disappoints; he is unable to remain steady and in time he becomes a negative influence, and Stingo's rival for Sophie's affections. Sophie, in fact, for all her supposed centrality, at times seems little more than a foil in their struggle for dominance.

Perhaps that is the real surprise of *Sophie's Choice*, that a novel that seems to be about the Holocaust is only partially so, that the struggle which is at its center is rather an essential conflict of American cultural history. Certainly that part of the Holocaust that does figure prominently in the novel is its meaning for the non-Jewish world. Sophie, after all, is not Jewish, and that seems to be much of Styron's point:

One of the most wrenching things that I've ever had to deal with, morally, is my assumption that this [the Holocaust] was a universal thing in which Jews were the chief victims, but not the only victims. . . . What I'm trying to do here is to take something that's on the rim of people's consciousness — namely the idea that there was a particular woman who suffered a hideous loss at Auschwitz who was not Jewish — without reducing the Jewish suffering at all.¹⁰

ed. Robert K. Morris and Irving Malin (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1975), p. 34.

9. Ben Forkner and Gilbert Schricke, "An Interview with William Styron," *The Southern Review*, X, No. 4 (October, 1974): 931.

10. Valarie Meliotes Arms, "An Interview with William Styron," *Contemporary Literature*, XX, No. 1 (Winter, 1979): 9.

Thus, while the Holocaust may be central to the novel, it is not an essential Jewish experience, nor is it at the center of the tragic struggle which Styron believes is necessary to his fiction. The real struggle in *Sophie's Choice*, as Alvin Rosenfeld recognizes, is the conflict between Stingo and Nathan, not only for Sophie's love but for what she means to their legitimacy.¹¹

There are times, in fact, when *Sophie's Choice* reminds one of Roth's *The Ghost Writer*, for just as Nathan Zuckerman needs to conjure up a resurrected Anne Frank in order to legitimize his Jewish fiction, so, too, does Stingo need his Holocaust survivor in order to assure his rightful place in modern American literature. And if Stingo is opposed in this pursuit by a resistant Nathan Landau, who also needs his Holocaust survivor, then both he (and his author) must do all they can to overcome Nathan's opposition. Thus, for all his inexperience, Stingo moves toward sexual and literary fulfillment under Sophie's tutelage and, thus, for all his sophistication, Nathan achieves Sophie's love only in a death embrace. While Styron recalls those grim days when the rivalry between Jewish American and Southern fiction was born, while he has Nathan predict the advent of the Jewish American writers, he suggests that Jewish American fiction, like Nathan, may be only a temporary phenomenon, even as Stingo emerges from his temporary sand-burial at the end of the novel, ready to face the morning, "excellent and fair."

But Styron is writing not only about the death of Jewish American fiction, he is writing about death in Jewish American fiction. To paraphrase Leslie Fielder, *Sophie's Choice* is at least partially about "Love and Death in the (Jewish) American Novel." As Emily Dickinson's poem about death brings Sophie and Nathan together, so their final embrace is a pledge of mutual suicide. Jewish American suffering is here more than impotence, it is a death wish; and Jewish American neurosis, a liveable if enervating condition, becomes psychosis, schizophrenia, madness. Nathan's madness can never be all right with him, for he cannot control it. Nor can he control anything else, least of all himself. For all his vaunted sexual prowess, he is finally a moral eunuch. If Stingo is Styron's Ishmael, Nathan is his Ahab, rising at times to his tragic stature but ultimately doomed to drown.

Will drowning likewise be the fate of Jewish American fiction? While Bellow, Malamud, and Roth suggest in their recent novels that Jewish American fiction may be gaining a new direction, Styron suggests otherwise. By employing a well-worn and self-conscious stereotype, Styron brings his Jewish American characters from ineffectuality to self-

11. "Much of *Sophie's Choice* seesaws back and forth between descriptions of Sophie's highly-charged, on-again-off-again affair with Nathan and Stingo's desire to supplant the Jew and exercise his own sexual rights with his woman. . . . As anguished as this is, Stingo's contest with Nathan is not on one but two levels — the first sexual, the other vocational and literary" (Rosenfeld, *Midstream*, p. 48).

destruction, and implies an end to their prominence. Is this a form of goyish revenge, the attack of the Southern boy on the urban Jewish mafia? Is Styron to be read as another Capote and Vidal? Whatever it may be, and surely any one reading alone is a simplification of Styron's position, it is the culmination of a rivalry that began as early as 1947 when Styron, "like others of [his] countrymen, another lean and lonesome young Southerner" wandered into the Kingdom of the Jews.

The Talmud Lesson

ELLEN FRANKEL

Why do you old Jews keep arguing,
Hammering at the law like smiths at a forge?
Your tools are rusting in the shed,
The farmers have fled the land, and then,
The field's too exhausted for the plow.

And yet you go on,
Gnarled thumbs swooping like hawks,
Long, white fringes flapping the wind,
Beards and earlocks curled into stubbornness.

What a motley crew you are —
Patricians and cobblers,
A mystic, a madman and that Other One
Who preferred cold Greek truth to your hot-blooded quarrels.

Where are you now, my fractious rabbis —
In little yeshivahs where schoolboy
' thumbs
Dip and hover like little birds,
In the narrow streets of the Old City,
Among the scattered bones of the Exile?

Or here with me in this room
Where I chant the ancient Aramaic words,
Bringing you forth like some genii from a lamp,
To shelter me under your wings.

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Reflections on the Inevitability of Death: A Jewish Existential Approach

MOSHE HALEVI SPERO

From death, from the fear of death, begins all recognition of the Universe.
— Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*

At the moment of death, the *Ba'al Shem Tov* exclaimed, "Now I know the purpose for which I was created!"
— Martin Buber, *Die Chassidischen Buecher*, p. 330.

JUDAISM, AS A RELIGION WHOSE TENETS and practices encompass the physical and psychological as well as spiritual needs of humankind, has been shown in numerous applications to express itself in ways that are similar to the views of contemporary psychology and psychiatry.¹ Though its ultimate worldview is essentially religious rather than psychological, rabbinic anticipations of modern psychological theory and practice are of considerable historical and even clinical or practical value.² In fact, the alloying of religio-halakhic values and goals to psychological values and goals represents a significant amplification of the meaningfulness of both systems for modern man as he struggles to adjust to reality.

This paper will deal with the intersect between halakhic and psychological views on a specific aspect of the aging process: the confrontation with dying and death. With regard to the general topics of aging and death, numerous authors have delineated Midrashic and Talmudic anticipations of what we consider modern understandings of these processes,³ but most of them have confined their examinations to the ways in which the laws of mourning (*hilkhot aveilut*) deal with the realities of death and the needs of the mourner. The focus of the present paper is more broad. I am interested here in how Jewish rabbinic thinking sought to prepare the individual *throughout a lifetime* for the confrontation with

1. M.H. Spero, "Psychotherapy, Psychiatry, and Halakhah," in F. Rosner & J. David Bleich eds., *Jewish Bioethics* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1979); M.H. Spero, *Judaism and Psychology: Halakhic Perspectives* (New York: Ktav/Yeshiva University Press, 1980), and as demonstrated in the *Critical Review* section of the *Journal of Psychology and Judaism*, 1 (1976) to the present.

2. See the above and my forthcoming *Handbook of Psychotherapy and Jewish Ethics* (Jerusalem: Feldheim Publishing Co.).

3. See my review, "Halakhah as Psychology: Explicating the Laws of Mourning," *Tradition*, 16 (1977): 173-184.

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death and dying. I will attempt to compare some of the psychological tasks which have been correlated with the confrontation with death during the later years of life, and the notion of "life review," with certain analogous rabbinic notions about the existential import of death.

Man is the only animal who is not only aware that he can die but who also anticipates and lives in virtual dread of separation and death. Ironically, the anxiety or dread of death "is worse than death itself," as has been expressed by many writers.⁴ This anxiety can be dealt with in essentially one of two ways: it can be suppressed or denied, often by a denial of the reality of death itself, or it can be confronted in some existentially meaningful way with varying degrees of success.

Unfortunately, radical denial of death has tended to be the more common adaptation. In fact, the attempt to deny the fear of death is often linked clinically with demonstrable forms of personality conflict, and is evidenced dramatically in the ways that some terminally ill persons challenge their eventual demise. The late cultural anthropologist, Ernest Becker, in his brilliant cross-cultural analyses of attitudes toward death, went so far as to consider man's denial of death the root of modern civilization's intercultural discontent, dehumanizing excesses, and the flight toward an increasingly technocratic society.⁵ According to him, modern society, with its bristling weaponry, its technological advances, and its cosmetic preoccupations, has been designed, in large part, to disguise in every way possible the basic weakness and finitude of the human animal. The multitude of popularistic books and jargonized theories about death and "post-death experiences" and so forth often belie an authentic confrontation with death, favoring a softer approach: the psychologizing of death to death. Finally, the inadequacy of our defenses against death-anxiety is evident to anyone who has been clinically involved with the varied forms of religious awakening represented by the contemporary *ba'al teshuvah* but also by his significantly more pathological counterpart in the form of the pseudo-religious cult devotee. In this application, one is struck by how often such religious searching has been motivated, in part or in whole, by a deep-seated, pervasive, and yet inarticulable anxiety over personal weakness, human limitations, and death, reinforced by the advent of the Holocaust and the ever-present portent of nuclear disaster, and by the lack of authentic religious symbols and rituals with which to make sense of these ultimate limitations.⁶

And, yet, perhaps no system of denial can remain impervious to the sense of the inevitability of death. I have been deeply moved by a descrip-

4. *Gesher ha-Hayim*, vol. 3, p. 45 and also cf. *Zamakh Zedek* (1739), chap. 26, p. 52, "Rah me'od yirat ha-mavet – meha-mavet azmo!"

5. C. Wahl, "The Fear of Death," *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic*, 22 (1958): 214-223; E. Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press, 1973) and *Escape from Evil* (New York: Free Press, 1975).

6. R.J. Lifton, *History and Human Survival* (New York: Vintage, 1971).

tion offered by Harold Searles of a chronically schizophrenic patient whom he had been treating in psychotherapy for three and one-half years, who

had become preoccupied with picking up dead leaves and the occasional dead bird which hours of searching revealed, and then, by various alchemy-like processes, she attempted to bring these to one or another form of life. It became clear that she felt herself to be God, selecting various dead leaves and other things to be brought to life . . . Then there came an autumn day when, during (therapy), she let it be known, mainly in non-verbal ways, that she was filled with mellowness, tenderness, and grief. She said, with tears in her eyes, in a tone as of resignation to a fact that simply has to be accepted, "I can't turn these leaves into sheep, for instance?" . . . Here was an intensely experienced acknowledgement of human mortality — and the crumbling of the basis of her schizophrenic illness.⁷

Searles then provides an intriguing observation: "We all *do* suffer from something which brings us closer to death — namely, *aging*."⁸ The importance that we give to the early and adolescent years in our understanding of human psychological development must not detract from our awareness of the importance of the later years of life, when the inevitability of death becomes a significant variable in continuing development.

In a great many references, we see that the halakhah recognized the inevitability of death and the impossibility of maintaining a wholesome existence if this inevitability were not met with integrity rather than with despair or abject denial. The following are illustrations: "When Rabbi Yohanan finished learning the book of Job he said, 'The destiny of man is to die, the destiny of animals is to be slaughtered — all are destined for death.'"⁹ Or consider: "Each person should place a stake or post in the cemetery and thereby remind himself that someday he shall be buried there."¹⁰

The rabbis assumed that there would always be those who seek to isolate themselves from death. For those who would attempt to place death out of their perspective by seeking the security of like-minded fellows, denying death through the primitive belief in the immortality of the group, the Talmud warns, "When a brother dies, all should worry; when a colleague dies, the entire group should worry."¹¹ "When there is a death in the city, the entire community is forbidden to work."¹² When death shatters the myth of the immortality of the horde, each member

7. H. Searles, *Collected Papers on Schizophrenia and Related Subjects* (New York: International Universities Press, 1965), p. 493.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 510.

9. *Ber.* 17a; see also *Ruth* R. 2, "All will die and all are destined for death."

10. *Lev.* R. 5:5.

11. *Shab.* 105b-106a; also *M.T., Hil. Avel.* 13:12. See *Sh. A., Y.D.* 335:2 which states that although one should not visit one's ailing enemy lest it be thought that one is deriving sadistic pleasure from the enemy's illness, one *should* attend one's enemy's funeral — even carry his casket — since no man maintains his enmity when confronting mankind's common fate (see *Rama* and *SHaKH*, *ad loc.*).

12. *M.K.* 27b.

suspends denial and begins to confront the ultimacy of his own death.¹³ Equally shattered is denial through the fantasy of exchange, for, at the moment of death, "No man can send his son or his daughter or his slave."

It is obvious, from the rabbinic viewpoint, that confrontation with death is a necessity, and its denial is a monumental inauthenticity, the perpetuation of a lie. In Talmudic terms, only "the evil person fears not death,"¹⁵ for to deny death is to deny the "evils" which cause it. Or, to put it positively, "And the living will lay it upon his heart' — these are the righteous who place (an awareness) of death upon their hearts."¹⁶ An alternative approach which may render the concept of death less anxiety-provoking is to see it as merely a temporary phase in the eternal birth-death-rebirth cycle.

Perhaps since the dawn of self-consciousness, thinkers have been aware that the intuitive perception of death as the ultimate limitation can also serve in an energizing or motivating capacity, as a stimulus for productive and efficient living. This view is expressed in the following midrash: "In the Torah of R. Meir it was written: 'And behold it was *very* good' — and behold, death is *very* good." R. Meir's exposition has been interpreted to mean that death must be approached as a part of the cycle of eternity, as an implement for change and restructuring, as an incentive for productivity.¹⁹ Indeed, if there is an optimistic aspect to Freud's notion of the death instinct (Thanatos) and its fatalistic mechanism, the repetition compulsion, it is in the awareness that individuals constantly attempt to escape it, suppress it, master it, or, if necessary, deny it in the effort to give meaning to their strivings and creations. However, as we illustrated above, denial of death is rarely complete and, as Judaism suspected, such denial can be psychologically costly. A mere philosophical *belief* alone in the Afterworld is also an incomplete way to deal with the consequences of death. Thus, one must assume that an approach such as is implicit in the interpretation of R. Meir's view seeks to accomplish something more than simply placing death in the forefront of man's awareness.

R. Meir's view is significant primarily as an introduction to what might be termed "authentic" approaches to death. The essential contribution of such approaches lies not only in the willingness to have beliefs about, or to confront, death, but also to incorporate death into one's everyday perspectives in a manner which enables one to experience a

13. "Al *pahad* *azmam maspidim*," *Menorat ha-Ma'or*: *Ner* 3, *Klal* 8:3(3).

14. Eccl. R. 8:8; Deut. R. 9:3 (cf. with Gen. R. 100).

15. *Shab.* 31b; also, "Who is an indisputable fool? Who sees the death of his friend or enemy, but fears not that *he* may die!" in R. Judah Alharizi, *Tahkemoni*, p. 297.

16. Eccl. R. 7:9 to Eccl. 7:2.

17. Becker, *Op. cit.*, 1973.

18. Gen. R. 9:5 to Gen. 1:31.

19. B.H. Epstein, *Torah Temimah*, vol. 1, to Gen. 1:31. But cf. *Tanhumah Kedoshim*, "Therefore did God hide from man the day of his death . . ."

perceptible transformation in attitude, feeling, even “use” for death. Existentialism, for example, has attempted to express an authentic approach toward death.²⁰ As Rollo May expressed it,

The confronting of death gives the most positive reality to life itself. It makes the individual existence real, absolute and concrete. For death as an irrelative potentiality singles man out, and, as it were, individualizes him to make him understand the potentiality of being in others . . . when he realizes the inescapable nature of his own death. Death is, in other words, the one fact of my life which is not relative but absolute . . .²¹

Precisely in confronting the absolute qualities of death, however, lie the seeds of renewed anxiety and despair! For once man confronts death, he is forced to realize that he can become *nothing*, that he can lose himself and his world.²² And the reverse is also true: meaningless and directionless existence during a life time amounts to a “little death” — “Man only dies because of stagnation”²³ — and, as the rabbis put it, there is no man who does not taste such death “every day.”²⁴ Eissler depicted the despair caused by the idea of death as follows:

When the terror of death reaches its peak, the individual is in the state of despair. The inescapability of the shrinkage of the future to the pinpoint of a single moment is experienced as a reality. The ego feels as if the whole possible future were experienced in this one short moment; the free flow of time is stopped; future is not converted into present and the latter into past. The personality no longer grows in time but reaches a standstill.²⁵

It is this “shrinkage of the future to the pinpoint of a single moment” which allows us to make sense of the midrashic commentary to *Ecclesiastes*, “From the moment of birth is the moment of death.”²⁶ Every moment of being entails the possibility of non-being, or, as echoed in the 15th century epic, *Der Ackermann aus Böhmen*, “As soon as man comes to life, he is immediately old enough to die.”²⁷

In another sense, the confrontation with death can elicit despair by the recognition at any point in life that it is too late to change one's life in major ways. At the same time, such despair can be an impetus for healthy development. For Erik Erikson, despair is itself an inevitable correlate of the awareness of death, which intensifies as one approaches old age, but it

20. H. Barnes, *Humanistic Existentialism: The Literature of Possibility* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1959).

21. R. May, “Contributions of Existential Psychotherapy,” in R. May, E. Angel, & H. Ellenberger, eds., *Existence* (New York: Basic Books, 1958), p. 49.

22. Ibid., and Becker, *Op. cit.*

23. *Avot de-Rav Natan* 11; cf. with W. Heron, “Pathology of Boredom,” *Scientific American*, 196 (1957): 52-68.

24. Zohar Gen. 184 and see also Eccl. R. 12.

25. K. Eissler, *The Psychiatrist and the Dying Patient* (New York: International Universities Press, 1955), p. 278.

26. Eccl. R. 3:2 to Eccl. 3:2.

27. Eissler, *Op. cit.*, p. 5; This was also Heidegger's concept in *Sein zum Tode* (being-toward-death). Dying does not mean that existence has reached an end, but that death is a mode of being into which existence enters as soon as it begins.

may, in fact, be an important developmental or normal aspect of the process of adjusting to old age. According to him, the successful resolution of the integrity *versus* despair crisis actually requires looking back and addressing questions about the meaningfulness of one's life, the intersection of one's life with history, and the degree to which one's life has been a worthwhile venture.²⁸ An "integrity crisis" is said to develop when the individual *cannot* accept that an exhaustive life review *will* reveal many incompleting tasks, unsatisfying relationships, and other gaping interpersonal lacunae and intrapersonal lacks of closure which are indigenous to our limited abilities ("No man leaves the world with half his wants fulfilled" [Eccl. R. 1:34,3:12]); when an individual is not prepared to anticipate death or to accept its ultimacy in some meaningful, non-defensive way; when the anticipation of death conjures up *only* feelings of loss, separation, and grief rather than any sense of fulfillment, accomplishment, and love; when the imminence of death causes regression to the illusory safety of an infantile world rather than to confrontation with death and the resolution of life's remaining demands within the context of the limits it imposes. Man's increasing inability satisfactorily to resolve the "integrity crisis" is perhaps what R. Moshe Sofer anticipated when he lamented, "Many people complain that they have nothing with which to live. Would it not be more sensible for them to complain that they have nothing with which to die?"²⁹

The rabbis recognized that another key source of despair when anticipating death is that it is inevitably unpredictable. Georg Simmel expressed this problem in the following fashion, "In man's knowledge *that* he will die — in contrast to his ignorance of *when* he will die — is to be found a basic antinomy implicit in the structure of human action."³⁰ The rabbis expressed this antinomy in their characteristic prose: "A man cannot say to the angel of death, 'I wish to arrange my affairs before I die!'"³¹ The acute and radically final quality of death is baldly appraised in the Talmudic hyperbole, "Man — today he *is*, tomorrow he *is not*."³² Practically, the resolution of ego integrity *versus* despair cannot be the result of a sudden and isolated reflection, but, rather, evolves from a time-consuming project which, though based on the inevitability of death, must presume the any-momentness of death. At one level, this project begins in late adulthood and is provoked by changing perspectives, identifications, and roles. "As a man reaches the age of his fathers (*perek avotav*, or an identification with his fathers), he should anticipate (*vid'ag*, lit.: be anxious about) death for five years before and five years afterward."³³

28. E. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968).

29. M. Lipson, ed., *Mi-Dor Dor* (Tel Aviv: 1929), p. 243.

30. *Tod und Unsterblichkeit*, in his *Lebensanschauung* (Munich: Dunker & Humbolt, 1918), pp. 99-153.

31. Eccl. R. 8:11; Deut. R. 9:3.

32. J.T. Sanh. 6:10; Eccl. R. 3:2.

33. Gen. R. 65.

Yet, the mere awareness of death, even on the level of some of the authentic approaches to death, may not lead to the necessary transformations in living. Thus, at the optimum level, the project occupies a lifetime, and begins at birth. "When Reb Bunin lay dying his wife burst into tears. He said to her, 'What are you crying for? My whole life was only that I might learn how to die!'"³⁴

How do one's beliefs about death affect the quality of life in the years preceding death? Simone de Beauvoir said: "A consequence of biological decay is the impossibility of surpassing oneself and of becoming passionately concerned with anything; it kills all projects, and it is by this expedient that it renders death acceptable."³⁵ The implication here is that there is a functional or adaptational aspect to the reduction in energy as death nears — a preparatory orientation of nonresistance. But this seems defeatist, and surely does not exhaust the manner in which old age and death confront each other. Judaism demands, in fact, that old age be stamped with a religious energy which transcends any possible physical exhaustion: "Cast me not off in the time of old age: forsake me not when my strength fails."³⁶ "And watch yourself — this teaches: watch your soul during the time of death,"³⁷ which suggests that the process of creativity must continue inclusive of the moment of death.

I think that Judaism offers yet another approach to death and to despair in the face of death which may best be illustrated after briefly considering some current psychological notions.

Experimental data has suggested that changes in developmental progression in the advancing years of life may not be timed merely by chronological age, but, rather, are set in motion by the nearness of the individual to death.³⁸ Dynamic changes in self-conception and self-actualization may occur even during this late stage in life as individuals confront crises and emotional developments related specifically to the qualities of aging and of nearness to death. More specifically, this view highlights a phase or process, perhaps two or three decades long, during which time the inevitability of death and its relation to current living becomes the major psychological theme.

This conceptualization of aging as "nearness to death" has numerous implications for understanding the phenomenon of aging and the successful resolution of the tasks of aging. One can see Erikson's stage of integrity *versus* despair as revolving around the theme of a future event —

34. In M. Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim: The Later Masters* (New York: Schocken, 1961), and *Mi-Dor Dor*, p. 244.

35. *The Coming of Age* (New York: Putnam, 1972).

36. Ps. 71:9.

37. Num. R. 11.

38. P. Cameron, "The Generation Gap: Time Orientation," *Gerontologist*, 12 (1972): 117-119; M. Lieberman, "Psychological Correlates of Impending Death," *Journal of Gerontology*, 20 (1965): 181-190; M. Lieberman, & S. Coplan, "Distance from Death as a Variable in the Study of Aging," *Developmental Psychology*, 2 (1969): 71-84.

death — representing a significant marker which supplants, to some degree, the importance of the number of years from birth as the momentum in the social clock. This notion can actually be demonstrated empirically in a shift in an aged person's time perception from "time lived" to "time left to live,"³⁹ which may be triggered by the unavoidable realization of impending death. The struggle to resolve this crisis stamps the aging process with an active rather than a passive quality.

For Erikson, the task of old age requires *wisdom*, a quality that he defines as "accumulated knowledge, mature judgment, and inclusive understanding."⁴⁰ This wisdom is the embodiment of the successful resolution of all previous psychosocial tasks and is recapitulatory in nature.⁴¹ At the most basic level, it involves a final making-peace with the limitations of one's identity in the face of death.

The relationship between "wisdom" and coping with the tasks of advancing age is well integrated in Robert Butler's concept of "life review." Life review is a "naturally occurring, universal mental process . . . prompted by the realization of approaching dissolution and death, and the inability to maintain one's sense of personal invulnerability."⁴² Such a review proceeds toward the necessary personality reorganization that leads to more successful aging and death-acceptance, and includes the achievement of such characteristics as "wisdom" and "serenity." The life review process in old age may, in some cases, or initially, lead to personality disorganization, depression, guilt, and obsessional rumination about the past, but remains primarily a potential force toward greater self-awareness. Butler's analysis emphasizes the adaptational aspects of reminiscence among the aged — in a manner similar to the achievement of Eriksonian ego integrity — and can be additionally understood as describing a kind of anticipatory socialization for the final period of life.⁴³ The important contribution of this concept is that some period of work on themes related to death is a critical "organizer" during later years.

Judaism also believes that self-transcendence, rather than self-actualization, alone circumscribes authentic human existence. This belief was reinforced by stressing the demands made by God and the nation upon the self, but also by emphasizing the futility of denying human limitations. Thus, "Reflect upon three things and do not come to sin: from whence you come, to where you are going (worms and decay), and before Whom you are destined to give an account."⁴⁴ The ever-presence of the

39. B. Neugarten, "The Awareness of Middle Age," in R. Owens, ed., *Middle Age* (London: B.B.C., 1967).

40. Erikson, *Op. cit.*, 1968.

41. R. Evans, *Dialogue with Erik Erikson* (New York: Dutton & Co., 1967).

42. R.N. Butler, "The Life Review: An Interpretation of Reminiscence in the Aged," *Psychiatry*, 26 (1963): 65-76.

43. See Lieberman & Coplan, *Op. cit.*, 1969, and V.R. Pine, "Social Organization and Death," *Omega*, 3 (1972): 2-10.

44. *Avot* 2:1, 3:1; see also V. Frankl, "Beyond Self-actualization and Self-expression," *Journal of Existential Psychiatry*, 1 (1960): 5-20.

Other constantly challenges the presumptions and validity of mere *self*-actualization. Such challenge received additional attention in the context of the anticipation of death. "Do not trust yourself until the day of your death."⁴⁵ "The work is not for you to finish, but neither are you free to disinvolve yourself from it."⁴⁶ "Said R. Tarfon, 'The day is short and the work is great; the workers are lazy . . . and the Master anticipates!'"⁴⁷ At once, the halakhic possibilities spoken of in these citations from *Pirkei Avot* question man's competence and provoke anxiety, but also make demands, emphasizing an ultimate sense of direction, and thus serve as inducements against despair.

Perhaps more relevant for the reinforcement of continuous life review as preparation for death is the Talmudic categorization of specific life stages, which pair approximate age groups with certain characteristics: "The forty year-old [achieves the quality of] understanding; the fifty year-old, [to give] counsel; the sixty year-old, sagacity; the seventy-year old, venerability."⁴⁸ Interestingly, the term for "sagacity" is *ziknah*, which the Talmud elsewhere renders into *zeh she-kanah hakhmah*, "he who has acquired wisdom."⁴⁹ One immediately notes the rabbinic understanding that a successful passage through later years involves intellectual and perhaps judgmental maturity, the "wisdom" so vital in the achievement of Eriksonian ego integrity. The ultimate goal, however, is *teshuvah*.

Rabbi Jonah says that the sages list these various stages of old age in order to make a person aware that he should bestir himself to *repentance* when he sees that he is grown old and realizes that his days will not stretch on indefinitely. Otherwise, he might be one of those of whom Sripture says, "Hoary age has also cast its mark and he knows not."⁵⁰

The Talmudic scheme thus contains an additional insight: that it is appropriate for man to deal with death as an outcome of a progressive process which begins at least in mid-life, rather than crash into old age armed only with defensive denials of the potency of death. This, too, is the sense of the Psalmist's plea not to be "cast off" in old age without having accomplished the necessary preparatory tasks. As ben Hasda'i reflected in his *Ben ha-Melekh ve-ha-Nazir* (25:p. 167), "Death is the shore of life; old age is the boat which brings you to the shore."

That halakhah is philosophically aware that a confrontation with death is inevitable as the years wane is confirmed by the ways whereby it seeks to reinforce such confrontation through the legislation of acts which apply to all persons and which allow death-sensitivity to become estab-

45. *Avot* 2:5.

46. *Avot* 2:21.

47. *Avot* 2:20.

48. *Avot* 5:24.

49. *Kid.* 32b.

50. *Magen Avot* to *Avot* 5:24, citing Hos. 7:9.

lished in the individual personality. Death acceptance, for example, is reinforced particularly through acts of omission in order to emphasize the lack of creativity and pleasure associated with death. In rabbinic writings, this emphasis often takes the form of reminders that the dead can no longer perform *mizvot* (e.g., prohibitions involving “*lo²eg la-rosh*”).

The prohibition against learning Torah on *Tisha be-Av*, or during the seven-day *shiva* period may also be understood from this perspective.⁵¹ The pleasure derived from Torah study is deemed antithetical to the state of mind that halakhah seeks to maintain at these times,⁵² and only the study of such works as *Lamentations*, which directly evoke the desired feeling-state, may be engaged in.⁵³ At the same time, in prior anticipation of death, the study and analysis of specific areas of Jewish law may also serve to absorb some of the feelings and emotions associated with death. Thus, according to Rabbi J.B. Soloveitchik, R. Hayim of Brisk occupied himself with the study of the intricacies of the laws of *tumat mes* (the ritual impurity of the dead) as a means by which not to deny, but rather to incorporate, death into his everyday perspectives and lifestyle.⁵⁴

Elsewhere, the Talmud, commenting on the passage, “Better to visit a house of mourning than to visit a house of festivities, in that [death] is the end of all man, and the living will lay it upon his heart,” states: “What is the meaning of ‘And the living will lay it upon his heart’? — This refers to matters concerning death.”⁵⁵ A specific law is derived from this passage. “Said R. Yanai: One does not discuss *halakhot* in the presence of the dead.”⁵⁶ The manifest purpose of this halakhah is to prevent the persons who are tending to the disposal of the deceased from becoming distracted. On a deeper level, this illustration reflects halakhah examining itself and attempting to minimize its potential misuse as a form of denial of death. Halakhic discourse organizes and integrates and, thus, it enlivens and refreshes, but death must be confronted in accord with one single halakhah: that it is forbidden at such moments to do anything other than empathize and experience the thin line of contrast between the dead and the living.

In addition to more or less practical legislation, halakhah also concep-

51. *Taan.* 30; *Sh. A.*; *O.H.* 554:1.

52. *Ps.* 19:9.

53. *M.K.* 15a, 21; *Sh. A.*; *Y.D.* 384:4; *Gesher ha-Hayim*, vol. 1, 21:5(1). An *avel* may study laws relevant to mourning provided he does not study them in depth or for the sake of pilpulistic satisfaction. See also *Arukh ha-Shulhan: Y.D.* 384:3, commenting on *J.T.M.K.* 13b, who suggests that a person who is in actual anguish because he is enjoined from Torah study, may in fact do so to eliminate such “pain” (see also *Resp. Yabia Omer*, vol. 2, no. 26).

54. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik compares this to the manner in which Tolstoi undertook the writing of *The Death of Ivan Ilych* during this literary genius’ dying years. Both involvements reflect the attempt to incorporate personal death within the terms of each genius’ respective worldviews (cited in P. Peli, ed., *Be-Sod ha-Yahad ve-ha-Yihud* [Jerusalem: *Orot*, 1976], p. 120, note 79, from the original “*Ish ha-Halakhah*,” *Talpiot* [1944], vol. 1).

55. *M.K.* 28b to *Eccl.* 7:2.

56. *Nazir* 6; *Eccl. R.* 7:9; also *Ber.* 3b. According to some, non-halakhic matters may be discussed in the deceased’s presence (*Tos.*, s.v. *eyn*, *Ber.* 3b).

tualizes life review and death awareness in terms of the process of *teshuvah* (repentance).

Said R. Eliezer, "Return to God one day prior to the day of your death." But does a man know the day of his death? Rather, let a man repent today lest he die tomorrow and, thus, all his days will be spent in repentance.⁵⁷

For Judaism, repentance signifies the ultimate of personal creativity and spiritual heroism. Whether or not an individual has "sinned" — *teshuvah* is paradigmatic for recapitulation and growth.⁵⁸ And the relationship between *teshuvah* and death stems from the fact that human vulnerability is the theological foundation of repentance and atonement.

With this in mind, we can see R. Eliezer as teaching that it is not the *future* moment of death but the *present moment of anticipation* that is critically relevant. The ability to temper the present, be it in youth or early or middle adulthood, with the reality of the inevitable is a prerequisite for resolving the psychological task of integrity *versus* despair. We saw that, for Erikson, wisdom was emphasized in this task as the embodiment of all previous psychosocial achievements. For the rabbis, wisdom is relevant only if it culminates in repentance.⁵⁹ By virtue of its recapitulatory quality, *teshuvah* can be conceived of as an inducement against the despair of death.

Inherent in the constant reanalysis of behavior which is demanded by *teshuvah* ("*yefashfesh be'ma'asav*"⁶⁰), and which is the goal of the customs and rituals associated with death, bereavement, and mourning,⁶¹ is the requirement that past attitudes and behaviors be transformed by the insight or "wisdom" one has gained from current self-analysis and from what one anticipates about the future. In many ways, the genesis and terminus of existence share common characteristics. As the *midrash* expressed it, "Man is born in tumult and leaves the world in tumult; he is born crying and he dies crying; he is born ignorant, and dies ignorant; he is born with anxiety (*anahah*) and dies with anxiety."⁶²

Nature duplicates itself, and there is evidence for a repetition-compulsion throughout the life stages of man. Man's introduction to, and departure from, the world are, indeed, mysterious; they are involuntary events and

57. *Shab.* 153a.

58. See Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Al ha-Teshuvah* (Jerusalem: 1974) and P. Peli's overview, "Repentant Man in the Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik," *Encyclopedia Judaica Yearbook* (1977-1978): 110-123. Actually, I coined the term "anxious man of repentance" in two essays, both of which predate Peli's "novel" typological category, "The Anxious Man of Repentance," *Jewish Life*, 41, 4 (1974): 54-60 and "Religious Anxiety and the Experience of God," *JUDAISM*, 26, 2 (1977): 206-216.

59. "Be close to heed the words of the wise men, for if they sin they offer sacrifices and repent," (*Ber.* 23a); and see also *J.T. Mak.* 2:6 ("*Sha'alu le-hakhmah* . . ."). See also *Ned.* 32b, citing *Eccl.* 9:14, ". . . and he surrounded the city with his wisdom," "wisdom" — this refers to repentance and good deeds." And also as stated in *Ber.* 17b, "The purpose [*takhlis*] of wisdom is repentance."

60. *Eruv.* 13b.

61. *M.T., Hil. Avel* 13:12.

62. *Eccl.* R. 5:21.

ultimate sources of trauma and anxiety. Yet there are entirely different meanings to the tumult, tears, and anxiety. These are discovered following the “*teshuvah* project” of a lifetime, through the constant analysis and reconceptualizing of one’s past through what has been learned in the present. Pathetic duplication occurs only when man has failed profoundly to perceive any difference between his origin and his end, his childhood and his adulthood, and between life and death, or has failed to achieve any heroic way of stamping life with the unique meanings that he has derived from his own confrontation with death.

Death is not merely an ultimate self-defeat, nor should it be utilized so to orient one’s life project with the very real risk of losing sight of the distinction between life and death (e.g., suicide). Rather, death must be accepted into everyday life so that selfhood is achieved in the most meaningful way: by adaptation to its limitations, its temporality, and with an eye toward creative recapitulation. To this end, the Talmud speculated: “What should a man do in order that he die? Make himself live. And what should a man do in order that he live? He should kill himself.”⁶³ To “live it up!”, to preoccupy oneself with the transitional and the temporal, is *not* life, since it takes no account of the reality of death. Indeed, such denial only intensifies the negative consequences of death. On the other hand, the preparedness to sacrifice one’s all for what one regards as ultimate and beyond death, and to calibrate one’s perspectives in view of the radical finality of existence, is to make sense of the value of life. *In this manner, death actually becomes less absolute insofar as its ultimate meaning is determined during life.* And thus one chooses between two approaches. One is expressed in the sentiment, “What was the cause of his death? His life!”⁶⁴ The other is expressed in the following ḥasidic statement in the name of Rabbi Yizḥak of Vorki, “In order to really live, man must give himself to death. But when he has done so, he discovers that he is not to die — but to live.”⁶⁵

Halakhah recognizes that death is not merely a biological or sociological or psychological or *secular* problem. Its perspective does not attempt to perpetuate only partially valid models or lies about death. Neither does its essentially religious worldview seek to mystify death. Halakhah does not defy or fetishize death by limiting it only to some place, time, or spirit.⁶⁶ Death cannot be made handy in this way. Death is not only in

63. *Tamid* 31b-32a and see *Rosh*, *ad loc.*

64. *Mishlei Hakhamim*, vol. 1, p. 3.

65. Cited in M. Friedman, “Death and the Dialogue with the Absurd,” *The Hidden Human Image* (New York: Delta, 1974).

66. “Death defying” and “death accepting” are categories used by Franz Borkenau, “The Concept of Death,” *The Twentieth Century*, 157 (1955): 317-322. On the use of death “defiance” in military psychology, from the standpoint of Halakhah, see my essay “*Sheloshah she-Hozrim me-Marakhei Milhamah – Hovah o Reshut? be-Aspaklaria shel Psychologia Zeva’it*,” *haDaron*, 49 (1980): 58-65.

Gehenna or at the end of days; it is not merely the Angel of Death. "He is Satan; He is the Evil Inclination; He is the Angel of Death."⁶⁷ *Death, in other words, must be accepted as a product of everyday evil, on the individual or group level, and its capacity to cause anxiety stems largely from our attempts to deny this fact.* By considering death certain, halakhah asks us to wonder about it. But to wonder about death is to initiate grief. However, rather than leave man to despair, halakhah seeks to mold this grief into a constructive, reparatory response of *teshuvah*. As a process which occupies a lifetime, the process of *teshuvah* represents the halakhic analogue to the life review process.

How does *teshuvah* operate in regard to coping with death? I would suggest the following. I noted earlier Eissler's observation that the terror of death involves the collapse of time and the loss of a sense of future — and the standstill of personality development in time. An authentic confrontation with death, then, can be successfully achieved only by retaining an appropriate perception of time. Coping with the anxiety of death requires that the ego maintain an unbroken representation of the future, and that man attempt to reckon with the future as he has painfully learned to cope with his origins. It requires that man not reduce death through illusion, and not try to anticipate it with more certainty or as having more particular wishful qualities than it truly has.

Halakhah offers such a perspective by squarely demarcating the beginning and end of man — and by placing *teshuvah* as the dynamic between these two points. *Teshuvah* asks man to live and die in a manner adequate to the reality of everyday evil. Man must recognize whence he comes and to what end he is destined, and accept that this end may come momentarily. The demand for *teshuvah* discourages illusion by making the future contingent on the past and the present. *Teshuvah* offers an authentic alternative to despair and the anxiety of death by emphasizing that the Jew's behavior in the face of death is regulated by a code of ethics which is valid for all of his life's situations and, therefore, the moment of death does not introduce any new principle requiring a special or unknown solution.

67. B.B. 16a.

Monologue From The Grave

RENEE LURIA LEOPOLD

It is lonely where I am and cold
and I would like to sink into forgetfulness
but I cannot sleep, just as when I was on earth
I could not cry. I could cry now. . . .

Thirty years ago, when I died,
I knew that I would meet my
children in heaven.

Alas, they are not here by my side.

I do not hear their bones rattle
next to mine, and their souls
have not passed through their lips to mine
like Ruth's to Naomi.

What use was it to be a woman of worth —
to honor my father and mother
and the Lord God —
if my children dashed themselves against the rock?

My daughters came of age in the seventies
and would have naught to do with the mysteries.
Each one of them abandoned
“for her price is far above rubies. . .”.

They bore no children, only careers.

I died, God, calling You.
I died, remembering Jerusalem —
but my right hand withered away.

My children gave their hearts for others' survival
their eyes so others could see.

But of Jerusalem they said:
Raze it, raze it, even to its foundations.

My daughters eschewed ritual and ceremony.

They gave their organs to science
their bones to a crematorium
their genes to oblivion. . . .

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The Eternal Triangle

WILLIAM ABRAMS

Love is a cosmic force. For those who stand in it and behold it, men emerge from their entanglement in busy-ness; and the good and the evil, the clever and the foolish, the beautiful and the ugly, one after another become actual and a You for them; that is, liberated, emerging into a unique confrontation. Exclusiveness comes into being miraculously again and again — and now one can act, help, heal, educate, raise, redeem. Love is a responsibility of an I for a You . . .

THESE MAGNETICALLY ELOQUENT WORDS were written about sixty years ago by Martin Buber, in a small theological work entitled *I and Thou*. Ostensibly directed to a limited audience of theologians, its fame quickly spread far and wide, achieving for Buber a world-wide reputation both in Jewish and non-Jewish circles. The title has now become almost a cliché because of its frequent use as a poetic synonym for what sociologists, in their clinical jargon, term “meaningful interpersonal relationships.”

I would like to offer two explanations for the astonishing impact that this book has had on twentieth-century thought. The first lies in the enigmatic title of the book itself. Like that of most geniuses, Buber’s work does not reveal its richness and profundity at first reading; it is left to the reader to draw whatever implications he finds most rewarding from the veiled, but always poetic, expression. Thus, a discussion quickly arose as to whether the “Thou” in the motto referred to God, or to another human, or both.

In a preface to his new translation of *I and Thou*, published in 1970, Martin Kaufman gives his answer to that question and says, essentially, that the reference is to *both* God and a human partner and that, in fact, the two are inextricably intertwined. He writes:

The motto (in the original German: *Ich und Du*) could scarcely be understood as it was meant. But rightly understood, it serves notice that the book was grounded in an actual relationship between a human I and a human You.

He goes on to explain the role of God in the relationship, thus:

The central stress falls on You — not Thou. God is present when I confront you. But if I look away from You, I ignore Him. As long as I merely experience or use you, I deny God. But when I encounter You, I encounter Him.

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The second explanation offers a clue to the reason why, as the 20th century has moved on, the influence of the book, instead of diminishing as the novelty of its message wore off, has constantly increased. Today its message forms the basis of the personal philosophy of many, perhaps even a majority of, young adults. No matter what the theologians have said, they choose to read it as a description of human relationship, and the bold, unqualified, ringing declaration that "Love is a cosmic force" is, for them, the only basic value on which they can unanimously agree.

Paradoxically, this faith stems, not from youthful romanticism, but from a profound sense of disillusionment and cynicism. We should recall that, when the book was written in 1923, the secular outlook held sway throughout the Western World. The 19th century had transmitted a variety of secularist "faiths": faith in one's country and its leaders — patriotism — which had demonstrated its power by enabling the Allies to defeat the Germans in the recently concluded First World War, thus making the world "safe" for the second faith — democracy; faith in the prevailing economic system to solve all economic problems — capitalism; faith in the ability of man, by his own unaided reason, through universal education, scientific research and technological achievement to bring universal peace and harmony to the world — humanism. Then there began to arise another secularist faith, quickly embraced by a small but growing number of disillusioned liberals, revolted by the carnage of the First World War. This new faith was Communism, and its corollaries: statism, and a planned socialist economy.

But by the end of the 1960s, the catastrophic era after World War I had destroyed all of these secularist faiths, one by one, and even the one basic underlying faith common to all secularists: the very notion that "progress" (through education, technology and science) can be achieved by man alone — as so ringingly proclaimed by Henley:

I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.

The bitter irony which now became evident to each succeeding generation was that the horrors of the Second World War, the Holocaust and the massacre of millions by atomic weaponry were made possible only by the "success" of science and technology. Something had evidently gone terribly wrong. Where, now, could one turn to find a faith to live by?

And still the sad litany was incomplete. As the second half of the century wore on, a new concern arose, transcending for each individual all of the previous concerns of society. There had been tremendous technological advances, which still continued apace; they had enabled us to send men to the moon and perform similar miracles, though with no noticeable effect on the welfare or happiness of a single individual; but one could discern that this technology was imposing on all of us a mechanical, computerized and depersonalizing society which affected our ability

to relate to one another, to friends or to loved ones, on a meaningful, individual basis.

It was then that the realization emerged that the one faith still offering a possibility for human beings, and still within their individual power to control, was the message that Buber had advanced in his little book in 1923 — that the most permanent, most profound, most fundamental faith we can have is in one another and in the power of human love to be a “cosmic force,” as he had asserted. No wonder that so many people turned to his work in the hope that it would provide a psychological basis for at least a satisfying *personal* life. They turned their backs on the problems of society, on the ideologies and philosophies which had produced only bankrupt values and broken dreams, and threw themselves wholeheartedly into the search for the perfect “I-Thou” relationship which Buber had so poetically described.

In so doing, they of course ignored the fact that Buber was essentially a Jewish theologian committed to the religious world outlook in general, and to Judaism in particular, and that the main thrust of his book was *theological* and not psychological. It is important to understand this oversight.

I have noted that the basic values transmitted to the twentieth century were secularist. But the provenance of secularism was, in fact, the 18th Century Enlightenment. It was then that the *philosophes* proclaimed their faith in man's reason alone, without the necessity of belief in a life-directing supernatural deity; and they proclaimed further that the institutionalized Church, which had held sway over Western society for eighteen centuries, had shackled man's reason with its clericalism, obscurantism, and divisive religious wars. It was necessary, therefore, to throw off these impediments if man's reason was to be unleashed in the interest of human progress.

Curiously enough, in today's general disillusionment with the wide spectrum of secularist values, very few have given thought to the basic secularist outlook itself. Secularism, after all, is only two centuries old, and perhaps it is time to consider seriously whether the ideologists of the Enlightenment may have been mistaken in their general condemnation of the religious world-view, which had been the dominant philosophy in so many varied civilizations, going back to the very dawn of history. For the moment, let us merely record the fact that secularism is so uncritically accepted in intellectual circles today, and the religious world outlook so unfashionable, that those who turned to Buber's *I-Thou* for guidance were conditioned to ignore its theological overtones and to find in it, as we all tend to do, only that which they were seeking — a “psychological” formula for a meaningful personal life.

Unfortunately, they have found that the prize which they seek is tantalizingly elusive, despite the fact that most of them no longer believe in lifelong fidelity (whether inside or outside of the marriage bond), and

are prepared to seek out a succession of partners, in a frantic effort to find the right "Thou."

To understand this puzzling phenomenon, it is necessary to outline briefly the basic concept of "I-Thou," which at first appears deceptively simple. It is that no person should use another person only as an "It," i.e., as an object to be experienced, manipulated or exploited (I-It); nor, conversely, should one permit oneself to be so used, and play the role of "It" rather than "I" — a role of dependency, rather than equality (It-Thou); nor, finally, should both parties attempt to manipulate each other (It-It). Every person is an "I" to himself, and should therefore encounter another person in his full humanity, as a "Thou." When two people are able to encounter each other profoundly in this way, the "I-Thou" relationship occurs. Buber goes even further. He says:

In the beginning is the relation — as the category of being, as readiness, as a form that reaches out to be filled; as a model of the soul; the "a priori" of relation; the innate "You."

The chief obstacle to the achievement of the "I-Thou" relationship is that almost all of us start with one fundamental, and false, premise. Each one assumes that he is perfectly capable of filling the role of an "I" in the relationship and that the sole difficulty is finding the right person who is capable of filling the role of "Thou." The sad truth is that few, if any of us, are today capable of filling the role of an authentic "I," and this inability is due primarily to the false values inherent in the secular ideology in which we are immersed.

To understand how this came about, we must recall that the 18th century rationalists who gave rise to the Enlightenment did not have the benefit of Freud's insights into the tremendous power of the unconscious and, therefore, they succumbed easily to the egoistic notion that man's reason could control his instinctive drives. They therefore accepted Rousseau's concept of man as a "noble savage" who is corrupted by "society" into doing evil. And one of the chief institutions in that society which, in their view, had contributed to this corruption, was institutionalized religion, which to them meant the Church. Hence, they embraced atheism, and their views evolved into what we today term "secular humanism."

In their animus toward the Church, the rationalists overlooked — or rejected — the fact that Christianity had inherited from Judaism a completely opposite view of human nature, and it is the religious view, rather than the rationalist one, that has been confirmed by Freud and the psychoanalysts who succeeded him.

Judaism has always held that man is born a human being, and not an angel, endowed from birth with an instinct for evil (*yezer hara*), as well as an instinct for good (*yezer tov*). Christianity accepted this view of the duality of human nature, but attempted to explain it by postulating the dogma of "original sin," as expressed popularly in the New England Primer: "In Adam's fall, we sinned all." But the crux of the matter is that both religions

assessed human nature realistically, and the rationalists, who prided themselves on their ability to use reason to discern the truth, failed to realize that reason itself was the traitor. The best summary of this paradox has been given to us by the eminent theologian, Reinhold Niehbuhr: "The conscious life of man is the instrument and prostitute of profound unconscious hopes for which it provides rationalizations rather than disciplines."

In addition to their condemnation of religion, the rationalists also accused society in general of corrupting man, the "noble savage." They refused to recognize the obvious truth that society is nothing but individual human beings in the aggregate, and that the dichotomy which they attempted to set up between man and society is completely fallacious.

One can perhaps understand the naive idealism of the 18th century rationalists, when they set forth to change society and its depraving institutions so that individuals, whom they regarded as innately harmless or even virtuous, could, with the guidance of reason, set up new forms of society which would be rational, scientific and progressive. But surely all of history since then, and especially 20th century history, has made it painfully clear that there is no discovery of science and no social system which cannot be subverted by evil and tyrannical men for their own ends, and thus used to enslave man rather than to enlarge his freedom.

Somehow, many members of society today still cling to the naive optimism of the 18th century rationalists about human nature, even though their faith in new forms of society has been brutally shattered by twentieth century history. That is why they have turned so eagerly to the search for the true "I — Thou" relationship, in the forlorn hope that somewhere, out there, they will find at least one other person who is as good and noble as they persist in perceiving themselves to be.

Obviously, the answer to their dilemma is that they are searching in the wrong place. Before looking outward, they should begin by looking inward. And only if they do that, profoundly and honestly, will they come to realize that the first step on the long road to "I — Thou" must be to emancipate oneself from the secularist world-view, and to accept the truth of Micah's injunction that man's duty in this world is to "do justice, love mercy and walk *humbly* with thy God." If Micah were alive today, I venture to suggest that he would re-phrase his injunction to read: "Walk *humbly* with thy God *so that* thou wilt be able to do justice and love mercy." What the secularist must do first, then, is recognize the arrogance of his assumption that he alone is free from the *yezer harah*, and accept the truth that he, like all of us, needs God's help every day to struggle against it.

* * *

Buber's unique contribution in "I — Thou" was to adumbrate the notion that the exploration of one's inner life need not, in fact should not, be carried on in solitude, but can be carried on successfully together with

another human being — provided that both recognize that the relationship they develop will not be linear, but triangular. This means that each participant must previously have worked through and internalized a relationship of faith, trust, and commitment to God. Only when the lines of communication with God (who forms the apex of the triangle) have been firmly drawn, can the base of the triangle (the line of communication between the human participants) also be drawn, thus completing the triangle and forming the “Gestalt” of the “encounter.” That, in essence, is the basis of the “I — Thou” philosophy. It is summarized for us by Walter Kaufman in this sentence: “When I encounter You, I encounter Him.”

This approach obviously entails an overwhelming, even revolutionary, change in a secular humanist’s conception of the world, and of his own nature. Even more difficult to accept is the idea that he must himself initiate the process of reaching out to seek a relationship with God *before* he reaches out to seek the I — Thou encounter with another human being. Our Jewish tradition has always insisted that man must, of his own free will, reach out to God. Many examples could be cited. I offer only one, taken from the Rosh Hashanah Maḥzor: “The preparations of the heart belong to man; the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.”

In his book, *The Sane Society*, Eric Fromm brilliantly summarizes the complex process that we have been describing:

The whole of life of the individual is nothing but the process of giving birth to himself; indeed, we should be fully born when we die — although it is the tragic fate of most individuals to die before they are born.

The price of such a struggle is indeed high, but so are the rewards.

One other nuance must be clarified at this point, and must be clearly stated. We do not maintain that only religious people lead ethical lives, and that they are the only ones who can “act, help, heal, educate, raise, redeem.” Many secularists have led unselfish and even saintly lives. They have sacrificed their opportunity to gain riches and fame in order to spend their lives among disadvantaged people whom they have helped, educated, and redeemed. Certainly they have been able, without God’s help, to overcome, to a great extent, the *yezer hara*, which obviously does not have the same power over different individuals. Many people, whether innately, or through a disciplined upbringing, have been able to subjugate their evil instincts to a considerable extent, and devote themselves mainly to doing good.

But what we are discussing here is a true one-to-one relationship, and it is a cliché that it is far easier to love humanity than to love one’s neighbor, and thus develop a loving relationship with a single person with whom one lives on intimate terms. Before a large group, one can appear in the role of redeemer or educator, and thereby one becomes an authority figure, a status which has its own and very different rewards. But all too often we find, on examination, that the personal relationships of such people are unfortunate and unsatisfactory, that they are unable to

achieve with one person a relationship of full equality, love, and trust, that they are unable to show their own vulnerability and accept the ministrations of the Thou who can act, help, heal and redeem them. The ego masquerades under many guises, and sacrificing oneself for others may very easily be another masquerade, which bolsters one's ego.

* * *

Thus far, we have developed our discussion along the lines of strict logic, so dear to the secular rationalist. But a digression from logic into psychology is necessary at this point if we are to face reality. The reader will have noticed that, in the last few pages, we have introduced not only the "religious outlook," but have ventured to enunciate the word "God." We must acknowledge that even the rational and logical secularist of today is not immune to the well-known phenomenon of the psychological conditioned reflex, and it is a fact of life that the secularist, because of his secularist educational upbringing, has a conditioned aversion to the word "God." (Ironically, his aversion to the word and, thus, his embarrassment when he hears it employed seriously — and not as an expletive — is identical, in most cases, with that of his parents when they hear the explicit Anglo-Saxon four-letter words for intercourse, defecation, and other bodily functions that fall so casually from his own lips.) Nevertheless, before proceeding to our conclusion, we should deal with this emotional reaction, for our conclusion must, in logic and in truth, lead us inexorably back to God. Here we must call once again on the unmatched eloquence and profundity of Buber, when he dealt with this very problem in another of his works, *The Eclipse of God*:

God is the most heavily-laden of all human words. None has become so soiled, so mutilated, but for this reason I may not abandon it. Generations of men have laid the burden of their anxious lives upon this word and have weighed it to the ground; it lies in the dust and bears their whole burden. The races of men with their religious factions have torn the word to pieces . . . they draw caricatures and write "God" underneath; they murder one another and say "in God's name" . . . We must esteem those who interdict it and rebel against the injustice and wrongs which are so readily inferred to "God" for authorization. But we may not give it up . . . we cannot cleanse the word "God" and we cannot make it whole, but defiled and mutilated as it is, we can raise it up from the ground and set it over an hour of great care.

Not only must we pronounce this name, we must enter into a relationship of faith and trust with it, and commit to it our very lives.

* * *

We stated earlier that the "Gestalt" of the true "encounter" is triangular. But the outline of the triangle marks only the birth of the "encounter." The exploration of this "encounter" (or, to continue our metaphor, the filling-in of the triangle) continues for the lifetime of the participants and

constitutes the richness, the reward, the glory of the genuine “I — Thou” relationship.

To illustrate, let us return for the last time to Buber’s two main themes: “Love is a cosmic force” and “When I encounter You, I encounter Him,” and let us ask what do these really mean? How can we translate them into terms that we can all understand?

Let us take the “encounter” to its ultimate conclusion, a conclusion spelled out for us in our *Humash* when it states that a man “knows” his wife in sexual intercourse — the ultimate encounter in which a man and a woman can engage. It is precisely then that they most “encounter” Him, and the “cosmic force” of their love manifests itself. For it is only during this act that God shares with them His cosmic essence — His creativity — and bestows on them a share in His divine power to create a human life. Never is this power granted to an individual, no matter how righteous or even saintly he may be; it is granted only to the “encounter” and to the love that the “encounter” engenders, thus making it a “cosmic force.”

But, it may be asked, is not the same power to create a life given to any couple who engage in the sexual act, even if they care nothing for each other? Of course it is, and here, at last, we approach the heart of the mystery. For the same physical act can be experienced by the partners as only a means of satisfying each one’s selfish physical lust, in which case it becomes essentially an act of reciprocal masturbation; or it can be experienced as a celebration of mutual love, as a redemption, through interpenetration, from the loneliness of selfhood, and as a sacred ritual of sharing, at least potentially, in God’s divine creativity. For the first kind of experience, no preparation is required; for the second, a rigorous “preparation of the heart” is essential.

And, as always, God leaves the decision to man.

A New Stage in Jewish-Christian Dialogue

Review-Essay by MICHAEL WYSCHOGROD

A Christian Theology of Judaism. By CLEMENS THOMA, tr. Helga Croner. New York: Paulist Press, 1980.

Traktat Über die Juden. By FRANZ MUSSNER. München: Kosel Verlag, 1979.

IT IS GENERALLY RECOGNIZED THAT *NOSTRA Aetate*, the document dealing with the attitude of the Catholic Church to Judaism that was promulgated by the Vatican Council in 1965, was a significant landmark in the history of Jewish-Christian relations. Together with the Guidelines issued by the Vatican in 1974 to implement *Nostra Aetate*, these documents made life for any remaining anti-Semites in the Catholic Church very difficult — unless they were willing to disregard the explicit teachings of Vatican II. That is not to say that these documents were seen by everyone as perfect. John Oesterreicher, in a sense the “floor manager” for *Nostra Aetate*, at the Council, has published a detailed account of the pressures that swirled around the various drafts of the statement.¹ Like any Conciliar document, *Nostra Aetate* had to be finally acceptable to a broad spectrum of opinion in the Church and, for that reason, a certain counter-balancing tendency can be detected in it. The hope was that it would stimulate Catholic thought about Judaism.

In 1978, Clemens Thoma, Professor of Biblical and Jewish Studies at the Catholic Faculty of Theology at Lucerne, Switzerland, published *Christliche Theologie des Judentums* (Aschaffenburg: Pattloch-Verlag, 1978). This work has now appeared in an English translation, by Helga Croner, as *A Christian Theology of Judaism*. In 1979, Franz Mussner, Professor of New Testament at the University of Regensburg, Germany, published *Traktat Über die Juden*. Together, these two books signify a new stage in the Jewish-Christian dialogue. Each of them is a major study of the relationship of Christianity to Judaism. In his preface, Mussner refers to Thoma's book and asserts that they complement each other very well. While he does not elaborate on this point, it is not difficult to discern his meaning. Thoma's approach is that of the historian. He begins his exposition with “Early Judaism,” the period that earlier Christian scholars had termed “Late Judaism,” a term that expressed the belief that Judaism came to its end in 70 CE. If that is what happened, then it makes sense to designate

1. *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche, Ergänzungsband: Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil, Teil II* (Freiburg/Basel/Wien: 1967), pp. 406-478.

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the period just prior to the demise of Judaism "Late Judaism." But, if the reports of the demise of Judaism in 70 CE were exaggerated, if Judaism continued to live after 70 CE and, for that matter, is still alive today, then it makes more sense to designate the period from the end of the Babylonian exile to 70 CE as "Early Judaism," the term used by Thoma.

In any case, Thoma begins with the return from the Babylonian exile because that is the historical context in which he sees the origin of the fundamental scriptural texts of Judaism, such as the creation account and the explanation of the Sabbath as the day on which God rested. Thoma refers to this (Gen. 2:2 ff.) as the Priestly creation account and dates it in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE. As a specialist in Second Temple Judaism, Thoma's view of Judaism is deeply influenced by the critical dating of Pentateuchal texts which are read as much for the information that they yield about the state of Jewish consciousness at the time of their being put into writing as about the incidents that are reported in them. The result is that Thoma breaks with the Christian identification of Judaism with the Israelite religion of the Hebrew Bible and, instead, focuses on the diversity of Jewish groups during Second Temple times, including rabbinic Judaism.

Mussner, on the other hand, is more the Bible scholar than the historian. His primary interest is a reading of the New Testament that does full justice to the Jewish dimension of that work. While by no means ignorant of rabbinic Judaism, Mussner's primary source book for Judaism is the Hebrew Bible to which relatively little historical criticism is applied. He concludes (p. 20) that the New Testament (Acts 13:17–19) affirms the election of Israel and the gift of Canaan to the people of Israel as its land. These are teachings which the New Testament simply takes over from the Hebrew Bible. It has often been argued that a Christian interpretation of Judaism that is derived primarily from texts of the Hebrew Bible rather than from rabbinic sources inevitably leads to a denial of continuity between post-Biblical Judaism and the Israelite religion of the Hebrew Bible. Mussner proves this to be false. He demonstrates that there is a basic continuity between Biblical and rabbinic Judaism which, in his view, is also the case with respect to the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament.

After an introduction in which he acknowledges that "Judaism is self-reliant and autonomous, much more independent from Christianity than the latter could and should be from the former," and that "A Christian theologian must emphasize that the Christ event does not diminish or destroy a legitimate or autonomous Judaism after Christ," Thoma proceeds to the longest section of his book which he titles "Jesus Christ and His Message in the Context of Early and Rabbinic Judaism." Much of this is an exposition of Second Temple Judaism, though it is clear that the exposition is undertaken from the vantage point of the emergence of Jesus and his teaching. In the past, the tendency of Christian scholars has been to emphasize and underscore the spiritual grand-

eur of Christianity by juxtaposing it with a declining and spiritually weakend form of Judaism preceding it. This is, of course, not difficult to do in light of the seemingly anti-Pharisaic polemics in the New Testament. But it is not the route that Thoma chooses to travel. Instead, he writes: "All the religious ideas and ideals of the New Testament were circulating in some form among the contemporary Jews who did not believe in Christ" (p. 79).

This does not mean, of course, that there is nothing new in the New Testament. "What is new and singular in the New Testament," he writes, "is the historical person of Jesus, his activities and what happens to him, as well as the theological interpretations and initiatives called forth by his death and resurrection" (p. 79). In another context, Thoma writes:

In his relationship to the God and Father, Jesus gathered together old Testament Jewish traditions of piety in an original way and endowed them with new beauty. Yet, it would be a radical mistake to represent Jesus, on principle and in any way at all, as being in opposition to the God of the Torah. However, he did experience this God in a uniquely close and intimate way (p. 115).

In a footnote, Thoma characterizes as coarse and condemns unequivocally a writer who "insists that Jesus dissociated himself from the pathological religious coercions of his time by not submitting to the authority of the God of the Torah (or Torah ritual)." Without depriving the teachings of Jesus of some elements of novelty, Thoma finds it essential to stress the continuity between the spirituality of the Judaism from which Jesus emerged and his teaching. The novelty to be found consists of a deepening or radicalization of what already was beautiful but is made somewhat more beautiful by Jesus. We have, indeed, come a long distance from the kind of writing which praises Christianity by demeaning Judaism.

Nowhere is the problem of continuity and change in the teachings of Jesus and Paul more sharply raised than in the question of the law. By the word "law" as used in Christian discourse, we are referring to those commandments (circumcision, dietary laws, etc.) which Jews observe and Christians do not. The traditional teaching has been that these obligations were abolished by Jesus. Thomas Aquinas distinguishes between the moral and ceremonial aspects of the "Old Law." Whereas the former remain in effect, the latter are no longer obligatory. Furthermore, not only is continued observance of the Old Law no longer obligatory, but it is a mortal sin to obey it. Aquinas quotes Paul (Gal. 5:2) that "if you have yourselves circumcised, Christ will be of no use to you." Since many Jews today draw the same distinction between the moral and ceremonial law, declaring themselves bound by the former but not by the latter, it may appear that many Jews who have abandoned the "ritual" laws of the Torah have moved closer to Christianity. In his Foreword to the Thoma

book, David Flusser reports that a scholarly Christian theologian said to him: "The Jews have come closer to Christianity because many of them no longer live according to the Jewish ritual laws." "My dear professor," Flusser reports to have replied, "do you really think that a porkchop brings you closer to Christ?" (p. 7). How do Thoma and Mussner stand on this question of the law?

"Jesus, the so-called sovereign transgressor of the Law, does not exist" writes Thoma (p. 115). "If we take seriously Jesus' solidarity with his people, their faith and ways of life, as well as his care for their future, then it is not unreasonable to assume that he kept the Jewish law in its genuine meaning, in order to guide his people." Whereas many Christian writers make much of the alleged law-grace and law-freedom dichotomy, Thoma understands the Jewish understanding of Torah too well to lend credence to such distinctions. He is also too good a historian to think of *halakha* purely as an a priori system. He quotes Jacob Katz that "halakha followed in the wake of social change" (p. 100) and David Flusser, who writes: "For Jesus there was, of course, the peculiar problem of his relationship to the Law and its precepts; but this arises for every believing Jew who takes his Judaism seriously" (p. 101). Thoma thus reestablishes Jesus' continuity with Torah observant Judaism, as Flusser had done in his *Jesus* (New York: 1969). Neither Flusser nor Thoma denies a certain tension in Jesus' attitude to the Law. "Jesus," writes Thoma, "wanted the Law to be observed without sacrificing any human being." The question is whether Jesus' statements about the law which, for ages, have been interpreted as a fundamental rejection of the law, are in reality inner Jewish debates about the Torah, essentially no different than the numerous disagreements recorded in great detail in rabbinic literature. A sound judgment about this question requires considerable halakhic learning, which prompts Thoma to ask:

Which Christian exegete really knows enough about this complicated matter? It is quite indispensable that we have increased contacts with Jewish specialists in the Law (p. 116).

Mussner's treatment of the question of the law is a two-pronged one. There is, first, a section of his study titled "Joy of the Torah" (pp. 37-45) in which he counteracts the widely prevalent Christian view that Judaism was, and is, a joyless legalism consisting of a hopeless attempt to fulfill an endless number of legal requirements. He emphasizes that the Torah is experienced by the Jew as the commandment of God which is given and received in love.

Whoever places himself daily and in every respect under the yoke of the Torah, (writes Mussner) removes the everyday from the realm of the profane and sanctifies all of life in all of its aspects and divisions (p. 43). . . . The Jew fulfills the law, (he writes) because he loves God who made an eternal covenant with Israel (p. 44).

He concludes this section by quoting Paul (Romans 10:4): "For Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified." Mussner adds that Paul's attitude to the law is based not on lack of respect for it but on his Christological convictions. We will return to this matter very soon.

Having clarified the meaning of the law or Torah in Judaism, Mussner addresses himself to the question of the law and Jesus. He builds his discussion on Matthew 5:17-19:

Do not think that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets. I have come, not to abolish them, but to fulfill them. Of this much I assure you: until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter of the law, not the smallest part of a letter, shall be done away with until it all comes true.

Mussner points out that these verses have led to endless varieties of interpretation, especially in relation to the Sermon on the Mount (5:21-48) in which Jesus contrasts what "You have heard" with "But I say to you." Is Jesus here, in fact, abolishing the law and substituting a new teaching for it? Mussner denies this emphatically. Jesus, he argues, is fulfilling and not abolishing the law in that he "brings out the hidden, final and authentic intention of the Torah." "The ethics of the Old Testament," writes Mussner, "is fulfilled by the Jew Jesus in that he extends the ethical demands of the Torah into the innermost interiority of man, into his heart (p. 191)." Mussner concludes this section by quoting Thoma: "Jesus, the so-called sovereign transgressor of the law, does not exist."

Narrowing the gap between Jesus and the Torah is, thus, a joint enterprise of Thoma and Mussner, supported in the background by David Flusser. But the situation appears somewhat more difficult in the case of Paul, whose apparent break with the law seems far more unequivocal than that of Jesus. This is probably the reason why Thoma barely mentions Paul in his book and certainly not with respect to the law. Mussner, on the other hand, devotes twenty-nine pages to a discussion of Paul and his standpoint on Judaism and the law. He points to Paul in Galatians 2:21: "If justification were through the law, then Christ died to no purpose." Earlier (2:19-20) Paul had written:

For I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Mussner attributes Paul's conviction that the law is no longer obligatory to his conviction that the messianic time had arrived. With the dawn of the new age, salvation was no longer of the law but only of faith in Jesus, the Son of God, crucified and risen. But Israel does not take cognizance of this change. It continues in its obedience to Torah as if the new age had not yet appeared. Mussner emphasizes that the blindness of Israel is attributed by Paul to God who "gave them a spirit of stupor, blind eyes and deaf ears" (Romans 11:8). The disobedience of Israel has brought salvation to the

gentiles: "By their transgression salvation has come to the gentiles to stir Israel to envy" (Romans 11:11). Israel's rejection of the Gospel thus turns out to be an act of obedience. In perhaps the most important passage of his book, Mussner adds:

There is very little probability that an Israel that had become fully Jewish-Christian would still exist today as "Israel." Judaism would have been dissolved in the Church and among the nations. God himself has prevented this in order to reveal his might and graciousness to Israel before the nations. God's graciousness and might show themselves in that, in spite of the horrible catastrophes that have come over the Jewish people, he has not permitted Israel to perish in history *post Christum* (p. 221).

And thus Israel, which has refused to accept the Gospel, will be saved. Will it be saved only when it comes to accept the Gospel? Not necessarily. Mussner refers to Romans 11:25-26: "Blindness has come upon part of Israel until the full number of gentiles enter in, and then all Israel will be saved." Mussner emphasizes (p. 55) that "all Israel will be saved" and not only those who accept the Gospel. He thus clearly raises the possibility of a special path (*Sonderweg*) to salvation for Israel, a path that does not require conversion to Christianity.

It is hard for a Jewish reviewer not to conclude that the difficult work of Jewish-Christian dialogue that began after Auschwitz is beginning to bear fruit.

Before leaving Mussner's treatment of Paul on the law, it is worth noting Mussner's emphasis that Paul's comments about the law are addressed to gentiles and not to Jews. Mussner is very much aware that this fact is a "hermeneutic key" (p. 228) to an understanding of Paul's attitude to the law. And yet, with all the elements of a proper understanding of Paul in place, Mussner does not, in my opinion, achieve that proper understanding. As I have elaborated elsewhere,² Paul's purpose, in Galatians and other writings, is to discourage gentiles who have come to Jesus from being circumcised and obeying the law. From Acts 15 we know that there were those in the Jerusalem church who believed that a gentile who wished to join the church had to be circumcised and accept the whole Torah. Paul did not demand this much of gentile converts. The Jewish Christians who disagreed with Paul preached to the gentile churches that they were not Christians in good standing unless they permitted themselves to be circumcised and accepted the Torah. This created considerable agitation in the churches that Paul had established and, when Paul learned of it, he decided to present the problem to the Jerusalem church for adjudication. In Acts 15 we learn that the problem was debated at length and Paul was vindicated: the gentiles are required to accept only the Noachide commandments which rabbinic Judaism considered obligatory for all non-Jews.

2. "The Law, Jews and Gentiles — A Jewish Perspective," *Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. 24, no. 4 (November 1969): 405-415.

From this episode we can deduce that everyone involved in this debate agreed that Jews who accepted Jesus had to continue observance of the Torah in spite of their faith in Jesus. Otherwise, if, because of the coming of Jesus, the Torah was no longer obligatory for Jews, it would hardly make sense to debate whether gentile converts were required to obey the law. Such a debate was possible only among Jewish Christians who believed that the Torah continued obligatory for Jewish Christians but disagreed whether gentile converts needed circumcision and the Torah. Paul clearly thought that they did not. Prior to the coming of Jesus, Paul reasoned, a gentile could be circumcised, accept the yoke of the Torah and enter the house of Israel. After Jesus, a gentile could become an adopted son of the house of Israel through faith in Jesus and the Noachide commandments. What Jesus had achieved was to make this possible. And, if this is so, we can also understand what Paul means when, in Galatians 3:15, he speaks of the curse of the law from which Jesus has saved humanity. The curse to which he refers is that of Deut. 27:15–26, and is not the “curse of the law” but the curse associated with violation of the law. Jewish scholars have long objected to Paul’s mentioning the curse of Deuteronomy but of his failing to mention the blessing of Deuteronomy 28 associated with obeying the law. We can now understand why he mentions the curse without the blessing. Like any rabbi to whom a gentile applies for conversion to Judaism, it is Paul’s purpose to discourage gentile Christians from placing themselves under the jurisdiction of the Torah. To do so, Paul emphasizes the difficulty of fulfilling the demands of the Torah and of the dire consequences (curses) that follow from disobeying it. He refrains from speaking of the blessings associated with obedience to the Torah because that is spoken of only if the gentile insists on conversion in spite of the discouragement to which he has been subjected.

If all this is so, then Paul understood the church to consist of two segments, the Jewish and the gentile. They would have their faith in Jesus in common but Jewish Christians would have to continue living under the Torah while gentiles needed only to obey the Noachide commandments. The tragedy of Paul is that his words, intended by him to discourage gentiles from embracing the law, were interpreted by the church, whose Jewish component had disappeared, as a total negative evaluation of the law. I believe this interpretation to fit well with Mussner’s general point of view which seems to aim in this direction but does not clearly draw these conclusions.

In spite of their extremely constructive and positive orientations, neither Thoma nor Mussner avoids those difficult issues which most distinctly separate Judaism from Christianity. Among these, none is more significant than the problem of Christology, the evaluation of the person of Jesus as an equal person of the triune God. For the Jew, this raises the ultimate danger of idolatry, of the deification of a human being. It must

clearly be understood that this is a far more serious issue than the question of whether Jesus was the messiah. Since Judaism always understood the messiah as a descendant of David who would usher in a time of peace, justice and prosperity, for a Jew to believe that any particular person was, or was not, the messiah (e.g. Bar Kochba) is not a matter of ultimate significance. While it is no easy task to ask to harmonize the view that a person who lived in the past and did not usher in the peaceful kingdom referred to was, nevertheless, the messiah, with the traditional Jewish understanding of the messiah, it still does not compare in difficulty with the view that God became a specific human being who lived, died and rose on the third day. It has generally been understood by Jews and Christians that this Christian belief was the one most unacceptable to Judaism. How do Thoma and Mussner handle this issue?

If the teaching of the incarnation of a person of the triune God in the human being, Jesus of Nazareth, is the most characteristic Christian teaching from which Judaism must dissociate itself, then it might be tempting to define the Jewish understanding of God in the most antithetical mode possible to that of the Christian. That most antithetical understanding of God would be one in which the distance between God and man would be maximized. Such a God would be as unlike man as possible. He would lack personality and involvement in the affairs of man, preferably even knowledge of the existence of man. Perhaps he (even the use of a personal pronoun would be wrong), or it, would be unaware of any being other than itself since it would be perfectly satisfied with its own being. In short, the ideal opposite of the incarnated God of Christianity is the Unmoved Mover of Aristotle or the Good of Plotinus but not the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The strategy adopted by both Thoma and Mussner is to emphasize the anthropomorphism of the Hebrew Bible. However hard Maimonides worked, in his *Guide for the Perplexed*, to convince Jewry that the human qualities that the Bible repeatedly attributes to God — an attribution which the rabbis found rather unproblematic and did not hesitate to elaborate in much detail in the Midrashim — did not mean what they seemed to mean, the fact remains that the God of the Bible is depicted in thoroughly human terms. The God of Israel is not an abstract philosophic Absolute but a person whom the praying Jew can address. And even an element of corporeality cannot be completely excluded. God resides in the Temple of Jerusalem as he did earlier in the Tabernacle. If, as Descartes made clear, the essence of corporeality is extension — the occupation of space — then a God who can be localized is brought into the context of the corporeal world as known by man. Viewed in this light, the distance between the anthropomorphic God of the Hebrew Bible and the God who became man of Christianity is diminished. In Thoma's words:

If God walks in the cool of the day in paradise (Gen 3:8), is seen on the mountain by the elders in Israel (Ex 24:9–11), with his strong hand and

outstretched arm brings Israel out of Egyptian slavery (Deut 5:15), and has the appearance of man (Ez 1:26), could he not, if he so decided, become man? In the quoted passages, the Bible speaks mythologically and organically, of course, but what else can one do with mysteries, such as God's talking to men, manifesting himself to them, leading them, etc.? (p. 129).

Jewish theology cannot evade the question that Thoma here asks: "... could he [God] not, if he so decided, become man?" In an article to which Thoma refers (pp. 128-129), I wrote that

... too often rationalistically minded Jewish theologians have made it appear that Judaism resists incarnation on some *a priori* grounds as if the Jewish philosopher can somehow determine ahead of time just what God can or cannot do, what is or is not possible for Him, what His dignity does or does not allow. The truth is, of course, that it would be difficult to imagine anything further removed from authentic Jewish faith which does not prescribe for God from some alien frame of reference but listens obediently to God's free decisions, none of which can be prescribed or even anticipated by man. If Judaism cannot accept incarnation it is because it does not hear this story, because the Word of God as it hears it does not tell it, and because Jewish faith does not testify to it. And if the church does accept incarnation, it is not because it somehow discovered that such an event had to occur given the nature of God, or of being, reality, or anything else, but because it hears that this was God's free and gracious decision, a decision not predictable by man. Strangely enough, the disagreement between Judaism and Christianity, when understood in this light, while not reconcilable, can be brought into the context within which it is a difference of faith regarding the free and sovereign act of the God of Israel.³

Thoma comments:

According to Wyschogrod, who does not write as an apologist but, in this instance, as an historian of the Bible, the Incarnation was not foreseeable in the Hebrew Scriptures nor possible as a prophecy. It must be regarded as a wholly unexpected, unforeseen gift. After the unexpected had happened and been the subject of abundant attestation — after the fact, that is — it is now possible to discuss whether or not the Incarnation is in opposition to the spirit of the Tanakh (p. 129).

The disagreement between Judaism and Christianity on the incarnation must be neither underestimated nor overestimated. We overestimate the difference when Judaism is made to teach not only that the incarnation *did* not happen but that it *could* not have happened. As we have already seen, the statement that something could not have happened is usually based on metaphysical or logical ground which become problematic when applied to God's free actions. I do not think that the Bible is very sympathetic to human preconceptions about what God will or will not, can or cannot do. The only exception to this — and I do not think it is really an exception — is the faith that God will not violate his promises. But that is

3. "Why Was and Is the Theology of Karl Barth of Interest to a Jewish Theologian," in *Footnotes to a Theology: The Karl Barth Colloquium of 1972*, ed. by Martin Rumscheidt (Canada: S.R. Supplements, 1974), pp. 99-100.

not a question of asserting that God is unable to do so. We believe that he will keep his promises because he has said that he will do so and we believe him. We are not imposing a metaphysical system of the possible and the impossible on God but simply accepting his freely proclaimed decision to do, or refrain from doing, something. We are, therefore, not subordinating God to external metaphysical conditions.

But what about the question that Thoma raises, "whether or not the Incarnation is in opposition to the spirit of the Tanakh"? Here, I think, we cannot give a clear-cut yes or no answer. The God of the Hebrew Bible is one who enters into relation with man. He has motives and expectations, some of which are fulfilled while others are not. From time to time he comes down to earth from his place of abode and is to be found in specific places on earth. Some of these become his abode on earth, e.g., the Temple in Jerusalem. Even if these expressions are not interpreted completely literally, if they are not to lose all recognizable meaning they must retain some of their normal meaning and, if they do, while we are certainly not left with a God who is a human being, we are left with a God who is not totally dissimilar to a human being.

But there is also the negative aspect which accounts for the sharpness of the Jewish rejection of the Incarnation. However close God comes to man in the Hebrew Bible, however involved he is in human hopes and fears, God remains the eternal judge of man whose human nature — albeit in the image of God — is not to be confused with God. It is easy for man to ignore this difference; to see himself as the master of his own fate. When he does so, God reminds him of his creatureliness and the limitation of his power. While he is not simply a puppet in God's hands but a dialogue partner of his creator, he is certainly not the equal of God in any sense. In this light, the assertion that a human being was God cannot but arouse the deepest anxiety in the Jewish soul.

While it is true, as we have pointed out, that there is a certain existence in space that is attributed to God, we must at the same time not lose track of the prophetic repudiation of idolatry which, in its simplest terms, is defined as the worship of graven images made of wood or stone. Another kind of idolatry is the worship of heavenly bodies such as the sun, moon or stars. No reader of the Hebrew Bible can fail to develop a deep fear of the worship of material entities as divine. And while it is true that the idolatry criticized by the prophets does not extend to the worship of a human being as God, it is not difficult to understand that the material nature of human existence would make any claim that a person who was a real, material human being was God very difficult for Jews to accept. It must be remembered that in the Christian teaching of the incarnation we are not dealing with the claim that God appeared as a human being (Docetism) but that he became a human being with a real, and not an apparent, body.

These are some of the themes that are discussed by Thoma and

Mussner in their profoundly important contributions to Jewish-Christian and particularly Jewish-Catholic dialogue. It is clear to me that, with the publication of these volumes, a new stage in the dialogue between Judaism and Christianity has been reached. They represent the frontiers of Christian thought with respect to the relationship between the two faiths. These views are not the same as those of the majority or even of the church leadership. An example of this is the recent encyclical, "*Dives in Misericordia*" by Pope John Paul II in which the following passage occurs:

Not in vain did Christ challenge his listeners, faithful to the doctrine of the Old Testament, for their attitude which was manifested in the words: "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." This was the form of distortion of justice at that time; and today's forms continue to be modeled on it.

The difficulty with this passage is two fold. First, it is well-known that "eye for an eye" was interpreted in the Judaism of Jesus' time to mean monetary compensation while this passage assumes that it was taught in the literal sense. In fact, there is no evidence that the "eye for an eye" text was ever interpreted in Judaism other than in terms of monetary compensation. Second, it is hard to see how an explicit verse of the Hebrew Bible, which Christians accept as coming from God, can be termed a "distortion of justice." There are other parts of the same encyclical which reflect the best in current Catholic thinking about the Hebrew Bible. But this passage does not and, even though the Jewish objection was brought to the attention of the Vatican by the American Jewish Congress, at this writing (February 1982) no corrective action has been taken.

It can only be hoped that the work of Clemens Thoma and Franz Mussner will have its impact on all levels of the Catholic Church. For its part, Jewish thought must respond in detail and in the same spirit in which these works were written.

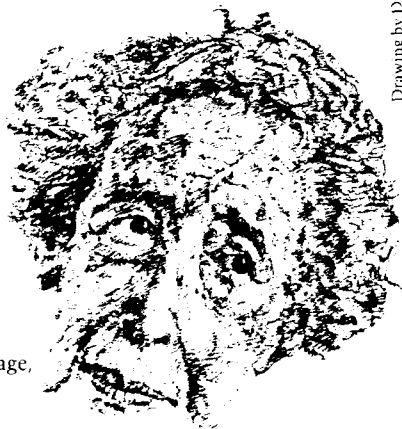
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Why Do We Do What Is Right?

Divine Commands and Moral Requirements. By PHILIP L. QUINN. New York, N.Y. The Clarendon Press

Reviewed by MICHAEL L. MORGAN

DURING THE TWO DECADES after the Holocaust numerous articles by Jewish thinkers focussed on the problem of revelation. Many of these thinkers, indebted to Buber and Rosenzweig, began by taking for granted that the experience of revelation, was, in some sense, the core of Judaism, that it was Biblically real and as possible now — if not perhaps as actual — as it was then. The problem was not primarily one of requiring and finding a recipe for action but, rather, one of making intellectual sense of what seemed so central but yet so maligned by modern objections. How could revelation, the encounter between man and God, be understood in such a way that neither God's transcendence nor man's immanence is compromised? How, in short, can Divine Power and Human Freedom endure each other without restricting the former or leaving the latter in utter ruin?

The problem of revelation for modern Jewish thought is generated by a respect for freedom and self-determination as essential to human selfhood. And this respect, won by the advocates of modern liberal thought — Rousseau, Kant, and their compatriots — weighs heavily on those for whom the traditional Jewish concept of revelation, required for understanding the notions of covenant and commandment, seems incompatible with that liberal ideal. Revelation, then, is a problem only for those

who respect the role of freedom and who also owe allegiance to obligations based on divine command. Moreover, while this problem expresses itself in general with respect to *all* religious conduct, it is in the ethical domain, where divine command confronts moral autonomy, that the conflict is most sharply felt. Such is one of Kant's onerous debts to modern Jewish thought.

The title of Philip Quinn's *Divine Commands and Moral Requirements* promises a full, book-length treatment of this topic. Hence, it also promises to be a book that no serious Jewish thinker ought to ignore. But the promise is not kept in quite the way that a Jewish thinker might have expected. Quinn's book is both richer and poorer than the Jewish discussion of this problem, a discussion, by the way, of which Quinn shows no knowledge. Furthermore, it is written by a philosopher for philosophers in a spare, almost frigid style that wins clarity at the price of elegance and grace. There is much to be learned from Quinn, but it will be difficult for the non-specialist to learn it. In order, therefore, to open what may be to many a closed book, let me explain what Quinn does and why it is both "richer and poorer" than the Jewish discussion which preceded it.

Quinn is interested in the conceptual clarity of our moral theories and their foundations. That is, he wonders whether one can develop a clear, coherent, and productive theory about our moral concepts that is also compatible with the theological assumption that at least some of the things we ought to do — and perhaps all of them — are based on God's commanding us to do them. Prior to making such a theological commitment to a commanding God, we

should ask: is there anything about our moral concepts that might lead us to reject this commitment at the outset as inconsistent with any coherent account of these concepts and our moral discourse, an account that nicely fits our most reasonable moral convictions and moral beliefs?

Quinn begins his study with a chapter on divine command and moral autonomy. In it he criticizes an argument that aims to show that no God who requires and is worthy of worship could possibly be a divine commander. James Rachels, who designed the argument,¹ takes the concept of worship to be crucial. For worship, he claims, entails unqualified obedience, whereas moral agency requires autonomy. No one, therefore, can be both a genuine moral agent and a worshipper at the same time. But, as Quinn notices, role conflict is not contradiction. After all, it is possible that God never commands what an autonomous moral agent would disapprove of. Now Quinn sees that this conception of moral agency involves testing divine commands with one's own good moral reasons and yet he thinks that this is compatible with unqualified obedience. For, he argues, while the believer is unqualifiedly obedient to all commands of divine origin, he is not unqualifiedly accepting of all *claims* that a command is of divine origin. One wonders, however, whether Quinn has not watered down the Kantian legacy too much.

The heart of Quinn's work lies in Chapters II to V. What he has accomplished here is, so far as I am aware, unique and of great value. His overall proposal is that one can design theories about moral concepts which are clear, precise, and

sufficiently rich to accommodate much of what is contained in moral discourse. These theories can then be provided with a theological foundation that says what a Divine Command Theorist would want to say. The results are coherent and, what is more, can be defended against ten philosophical objections typically raised against Divine Command Theories. In brief, nothing internal to these theories of moral value and moral obligation, when developed as Divine Command Theories, counts decisively against them. They are, as theories about morality, coherent, rich, and consistent with moral discourse and moral conviction.

While I find Quinn's project eminently valuable and interesting, I fear that those not familiar with, and tolerant of, his style of philosophizing will find it opaque. In the course of these chapters Quinn attempts to present theories about moral concepts — ought, obligated, forbidden, permitted, good, bad, extraordinary, indifferent, required, supererogatory, discreditable, and overrides. What he strives for is precision, and in order to achieve it he uses an axiomatic method, like that used in geometry, logic, and many other formal systems. Hence, he employs symbols, uses propositional logic, formulates definitions, sets down axioms, and generates theorems, sometimes with page-long proofs. All of this apparatus is employed in order to show how our moral discourse and concepts can be structured, and we can learn much about these concepts and their interrelations by examining what Quinn and others have done. But the reader should be warned that what is interesting and even at times exciting may, nonetheless, be expressed in stiff, contorted prose.

In Chapter II Quinn does three things. First, he fixes some basic requirements that any Divine Com-

1. James Rachels, "God and Human Attitudes," *Religious Studies* 7 (1971): 325-37.

mand Theory of ethical obligation must meet. Once a satisfactory Divine Command Theory tells us how crucial moral concepts are used and interrelated, it will show how our ethical vocabulary is related to our theological vocabulary. And it will do so based on certain constraints, based on the believer's "theological" convictions. For example, any genuine believer who holds a Divine Command Theory will want to claim that "whatever is required God commands" and that "whatever is forbidden God forbids." Furthermore, he will want to believe that "if God did not exist, then everything would be permitted" — what Quinn calls "Karamozov's Thesis." Hence, any adequate Divine Command Theory must generate these three claims as theorems in its system or explain satisfactorily why it fails to do so. Secondly, Quinn proceeds to construct three rudimentary Divine Command Theories and to show that they more or less satisfy his set of theological requirements. Finally, he carries out an extensive examination of ten typical "philosophical" objections to Divine Command Theories and defends his theories against them. He argues, for example, that Divine Command Theories do not argue fallaciously from "is" to "ought," nor do they suffer from a failure of universalizability. They are not refuted by the "causal" problem reminiscent of Plato's *Euthyphro*, nor do they, in a secular world, encourage moral libertinism or ethical skepticism. With such results, one might reasonably be optimistic; the three theories, he claims, are not decisively refuted either by the theological or the philosophical critiques of them.

In Chapter III Quinn takes these rudimentary theories — which incorporate only the concepts of being required, permitted, and forbidden — and embeds them in a

more comprehensive theory rich enough to handle the concepts of good, bad, indifferent, and extraordinary (at the level of values) and those of being required, forbidden, and permitted (at the level of obligation). The two basic (undefined) concepts of such an overall system are *ought* and *obligatory*. After developing the system, Quinn uses these two concepts to show how the two levels (of value and of obligation) are connected. He then adds his theological foundation — first the simplest rudimentary Divine Command Theory of Chapter II and then more complex ones — and proceeds to elaborate the results until he has "an ethical framework of great conceptual richness and significant precision and power" (87).

Unfortunately, such "ethical frameworks" or "logic" are still too weak. They make no provision, for example, for one obligation to override another in a conflict situation. This type of situation is crucial for both religious and non-religious moral thinking. Hence, in Chapter IV, Quinn develops a new Divine Command Theory capable of handling conflict situations. Building on Roderick Chisholm's "logic of requirement,"² he produces such a theory and shows how it solves the *Akedah* problem, does not, however, generate Karamozov's Thesis, but is easily defended against the ten philosophical objections introduced in Chapter II.

For our purposes we can pass over Chapter V, in which Quinn considers problems pertaining to deontic logic and conditional obligation, and turn directly to Chapter VI. Thus far, the author has dealt almost exclusively with philo-

2. Roderick Chisholm, "Practical Reason and the Logic of Requirement," *Practical Reason*, ed. Stephen Körner (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974), pp. 1-17.

sophical issues concerning Divine Command Theories. What theological matters have arisen are, he claims, very general and quite formal. Now, however, he turns to some more substantive theological problems for any Divine Command Theory. These center on the coherence of a Divine Command conception of moral requirement and a meaningful theory of divine attributes. Indeed, Quinn asks, if a human moral virtue in a Divine Command Theory is a settled habit to act in a certain way for a person who is disposed to do what God commands, how can one speak of divine moral virtues at all? For within such a theory every human moral virtue implies a disposition to obey God. But can we speak intelligibly of God's being disposed to obey Himself? Quinn's conclusion is that the only appropriate divine moral virtues are *analogues* of human ones, and he sets out to clarify what the divine analogues of forgiveness, mercy, and justice would look like.

Quinn's results are interesting. He argues that certain accounts of forgiving are inappropriate to a Divine Commander who is also perfect and omniscient. Such a God, for example, cannot reverse a moral judgment on the basis of changed beliefs about what is right and wrong. Nor can such a God give up a feeling of resentment based on harm or injury done to Him. But, Quinn holds, a Divine Commander *can* be offended without being harmed, and the displeasure based on that offense can be withdrawn provided that one repents. Here Quinn's central point is that while harm and resentment are inappropriate to God, offense and displeasure are not, and these are sufficient for a moral virtue that we might reasonably call "forgiveness."

The Jewish tradition is especially sensitive to the attributes of mercy

and justice, perhaps the central divine attributes in the Rabbinic tradition and the ones at the core of Rabbinic Judaism's views about providence and retribution. Quinn precisely defines divine mercy as the remission of merited³ punishment and requires the following conditions: God never punishes the innocent, since merited punishment *always* involves transgression or sin; punishment may, however, require *more than* transgression, e.g., freedom to act or an intention to disobey God; and mercy may require *more than* merited punishment, e.g., remorse or repentance. Hence, for God, the notion of mercy is severely restricted, excluding, among other things, the tempering of harsh punishments.

As Quinn recognizes, there are problems with justice and mercy. First, it is unclear how the remission of merited punishment is not, itself, unjust. Yet, since justice is a function of what God decides and does, this result would be absurd. How, then, can God be both merciful and just? While this problem is easily remedied by distinguishing between treating people *exactly* as they deserve and treating them *no worse than* they deserve, fairness requires that God also treat similar cases in a similar way. This leads to the second problem. How can God spare some, but not all, who transgress? Quinn's answer is subtle. To begin, we must distinguish *meriting* punishment from *deserving* it. While meriting requires only transgression, deserving requires

3. Actually, Quinn first defines "mercy" in terms of deserved punishment, where desert requires transgression and a specified punishment. Then, when he raises the problem of how mercy and justice can be compatible, he re-defines "desert" as requiring transgression, a specified punishment, and a failure to provide some excusing condition, e.g., repentance. What was earlier *desert* now becomes *merit*. I have abbreviated Quinn's account by collapsing his definitions.

sin plus the failure to repent or to provide some other acceptable excusing reason for remission. When God is merciful, then, He acts graciously to remit a merited punishment but has reasons for doing so, e.g., that repentance has occurred. God cannot be merciful when such reasons are not present, but He can *choose* to remit the punishment when they are present. This, Quinn holds, is fair. Those spared should be grateful; God acts justly even when He acts mercifully, and His mercy is always reasonable. I have my doubts about the fairness of this result, as I do about the truth of Quinn's final conclusion, that his account is compatible with the Judeo-Christian doctrine of retribution (163).

I have tried to represent fairly the care and subtlety of Quinn's study and to emphasize how precisely he takes the line to be between philosophical analysis and religious or theological commitment. This neutrality of philosophical analysis, however, is a matter of some doubt. In order to corroborate this doubt, we need only collate Quinn's several discussions of the *Akedah* to see how his different Divine Command Theories respond to Abraham's dilemma and how different is the Jewish interpretation of that tale. For if there has ever been a situation that tests the interrelationship of religion, morality, and philosophy, surely it is this one.

While we cannot carry out such a project here, we might summarize Quinn's conclusions about Abraham's dilemma this way: no plausible moral theory can allow that both killing Isaac and not killing him are required or even permitted. Abraham's real problem is epistemic — to determine what he is really commanded to do. Abraham can rationally reflect on this matter and conclude that he ought to sacrifice Isaac. This is neither a

wicked nor a muddled decision. Hence, whatever Abraham comes to do remains rational and reflective, while acknowledging what God commands of him. In short, Quinn rejects the Kierkegaardian "teleological suspension of the ethical" in favor of a watered-down Kantian moral agency adapted to a Divine Command Theory.

The contrast with Jewish discussion is revealing. First, Judaism's respect for human freedom is greater than Quinn's, for it realizes the need to locate that freedom not only after revelation, in epistemic reflection on the status or authenticity of it, but actually within the experience of revelation itself. As Judaism sees it, then, philosophical commitment here penetrates into the very heart of divine command. Secondly, Judaism does not rule out genuine conflict situations *ab initio*. Religious reality may make demands that result in paradox and hence no "rational" resolution even for philosophical ethics. Finally, Jewish reflection appreciates something that Quinn explicitly rejects time and again, that the *Akedah* is historically situated between the covenant with all mankind through Noah, which proscribes killing for all men, and the covenant at Sinai, which prohibits killing once more but this time within the context of a new social and legal framework. What is the role of Abraham's dilemma in all of this? The rabbis struggle to understand the meaning of this historical development, while Quinn ignores it, treating Abraham as falling under two timeless obligations. Of the differences between Quinn's Abraham and Judaism's *Avraham Avinu*, this is the most serious of all. Wedded to history, Judaism sees moral principles as applying to history at least in part because they derive from history and, once perceived, as ever again capable of historical modification.

One may doubt, then, that the

theological and philosophical components of a genuine Divine Command Theory of ethical obligation are as sharply or neatly separable as Quinn would have us think. Certainly the historicity and mutability of Jewish ethics makes one wonder whether Quinn's strategy is not biased from the start against religi-

ous convictions. This is a matter deserving serious reflection, and bringing us to see it is only one of the many virtues of Quinn's work.

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A Medieval View of the Aggadah

Decoding the Rabbis: A Thirteenth-Century Commentary on the Aggadah.

By MARC SAPERSTEIN. Harvard Judaic Monographs. Cambridge, Massachusetts. Harvard University Press, 1980. xiv + 289 pp. \$17.50.

Reviewed by JEREMY COHEN

Do you desire to come to know the Creator of the world? Study the Aggadah; for thereby may you come to know the Creator of the world and to cling to his ways.

(*Sifrei* Deuteronomy 49)

Rabbinic Judaism must be characterized just as much in terms of the Aggadah as on the basis of its legal, halakhic components. The homilies, exegetical discussions, fables, legends, and variegated theological maxims of the Talmud and Midrash are most directly expressive of the rabbinic imagination and world view. They have served to remind the Jew that his religion cannot be reduced to a spiritless system of ritual law; they have consoled him in times of persecution; and they have stimulated his efforts to penetrate the mysteries of this world and his life within it. Nevertheless, the Aggadah has also led to embarrassment and perplexity within the Jewish community, especially at times when the spirit of rationalism has dominated the religious mentality. The anthropomorphic de-

scriptions of God, the hyperbole, and uninhibited speculation in the realm of the supernatural which pervade it have put serious problems before those bent on reconciling Judaism with the tenets of philosophy and science. And even if the sophisticated theologian could somehow make peace with the Aggadah, how could one entrust it to the less educated and less discriminating laity, particularly when it came under the often vehement attack of the enemies of rabbinic Judaism? The Aggadah has, thus, characteristically confronted the thinking Jew with a challenge, and responses that it has elicited can offer the historian a keen sense of the intellectual and spiritual climate of the Jewish community in a given area and period.

In *Decoding the Rabbis*, Marc Saperstein has ably depicted an instructive response to the challenge of the Aggadah that was offered by a hitherto forgotten rabbi of thirteenth-century France, Isaac ben Yedaiah of Beziers. From the portions of Isaac's Commentary on the Midrash Rabbah and Commentary on the Aggadot of the Talmud (evidently part of a larger *Hibbur ha-Talmud Bavli* [sic!] extant in manuscript). Saperstein has succeeded in reconstructing not only Isaac's treatment of problematic *aggadot* but also his utilization of the Aggadah to explicate his religious and philosophical *Weltanschauung*. Isaac's commentaries offer pre-

cious glimpses of the social and religious history of Southern French Jewry, and Saperstein has endeavored to capitalize on these revelations at every stage of his presentation.

Isaac b. Yedaiah approached the Aggadah as having both exoteric and esoteric levels of meaning, just as many of his contemporaries treated the words of Scripture. The talmudic rabbis, like the prophets of the Bible, had frequently concealed the full, real intention of their teachings, so as to protect the masses from confounding and potentially threatening doctrines. At times the rabbis did speak plainly, and Isaac did not refuse to respect the *peshat* of many *aggadot*. But at least as often, when the rabbis ostensibly veered away from a scientific conception of the world or from basic tenets of the biblical faith, the Aggadah demanded decoding in order to become intelligible. At the heart of Isaac's commentaries, then, lies an elaborate technique of allegorical interpretation, which assumes that the rabbis followed (the alleged) biblical practice in using specific code words to express more difficult theological concepts. Fire and bird, for example, denote the supreme incorporeal angel; the sea and hand of God symbolize the universe in its totality; the leviathan and serpent represent different aspects of the material world; and tent, house, and clouds of glory/are all expressions for the human body. Since different code words could share the same meaning — and different concepts the same word — Isaac prevented his own entrapment in the inconsistencies of the Aggadah. His method led him to reduce the Aggadah's rich diversity of instruction and folklore to a limited number of basic theological lessons. Yet, at the same time, it facilitated the assumption of a distinctly Jewish garb by key philo-

sophical concepts, conceivably offering to the rationalist the basis for retaining his place in the traditional Jewish fold.

What was Isaac's religious philosophy? The extant material does not allow for a systematic exposition of his thought, but Saperstein has managed to isolate several strands of his beliefs. Here, too, Isaac is eclectic, with a variety of personal experiences and predilections conditioning his philosophical opinions. While the commentaries habitually manifest the great influence of Moses ben Maimon, Isaac occasionally departs from a strictly Maimonidean stance — as in his views on the *te'amim* for several commandments or in his teaching that a completely enlightened Jew has no need for messianic redemption. Isaac's doctrine of the supreme incorporeal angel draws on notions of the active intellect derived from mutually incompatible philosophical traditions. And his views, both speculative and halakhic, concerning women and sex may well reflect a complicated set of problematic relationships in which he was personally involved.

This impressive book warrants appreciation and evaluation from several perspectives. First, students of Jewish history will long remain in Dr. Saperstein's debt for resurrecting from oblivion the teachings and personality of R. Isaac b. Yedaiah. Just as the Aggadah itself deemed no subject "off limits," so R. Isaac's aggadic commentaries are here so painstakingly analyzed that they shed light not only on his metaphysics, philosophy of Torah, angelology, messianism, and anthropology, but also upon their author himself. Given the scarcity of individual Jews from pre-modern times who are well-known to the historian, here is an especially welcome contribution, even more so precisely because Isaac was not one of the intellectual

luminaries of his generation. Influenced by prevalent social and religious conditions in his community, "he seems rather to have mustered his considerable energies for propagating a discipline in which he himself was not an outstanding expert" (p. 89).

Second, Saperstein has presented the various teachings of R. Isaac within a meaningful context and so as to highlight their significance in the history of Jewish thought. The fierce Maimonidean controversies of the thirteenth century made the relationship of faith and reason a burning issue for European Jews, and Saperstein argues convincingly that R. Isaac addressed his works chiefly to determined rationalists who felt alienated from the Aggadah, rather than to fundamentalists who doubted the worth and legitimacy of philosophy and scientific logic. Yet the primary orientation of Saperstein's analysis points towards the broader question of the Aggadah and its controversial history. He employs a common (and sound) typology for explaining the emergence of allegorical interpretations of sacred texts:

Typically, in the first place, the text is of sufficient authority that it cannot be casually dismissed. Second, a new world view provides a compelling set of ideas that appear to be in radical conflict with the simple meaning of the original text. Under such circumstances, a typology of positions is predictable. Some will turn their backs with disdain on the new world view, adhering to the authority of the ancient text. At the other pole, there will be those whose commitment to the new world view is so powerful that it shatters the authority of the text, which they then ignore or even explicitly repudiate in a dramatic break from tradition. In the middle will be those who retain their commitment to both the ancient text and the new

thought system. They may do this through a kind of intellectual schizophrenia, which recognizes conflicts but either does not attempt to or is unable to reconcile them. More productively, they may resort to interpretation in order to demonstrate that the conflict between ancient text and new truth is only apparent, the result of an imperfect comprehension of the text; that the new idea is actually consistent with, implicit in, or even the ultimate meaning of the long-familiar but inadequately understood words (pp. 11-12).

Resorting to the final sort of response, R. Isaac did not rest content with salvaging the Aggadah for the rationalist; he "transformed [it] into a powerful ideological weapon of the new world view" (p. 16).

Although this typology is, indeed, helpful for appreciating R. Isaac, it does not entirely suit the structure and flow of Saperstein's book, for at no point does the author succinctly explain the new rationalist world view with which the Aggadah came into conflict. This philosophical outlook is admittedly implicit in many of the objections levelled at the Aggadah and is known to the specialist, but its systematic explanation, alongside the provocative introductory discussion on the Aggadah, would have given greater balance, force, and appeal to Saperstein's argument. Moreover, after formulating his schema for dealing with aggadic commentaries in chapter one and proposing, in chapter two (p. 22), to deal with R. Isaac within precisely such a framework, the author seems to have fulfilled his stated intentions at the end of chapter three (p. 78). The next three chapters on Isaac's thought and historical milieu, which comprise the bulk of the book and make undeniably valuable contributions, appear some-

what disjoined from their predecessors. Again, the author might have beneficially widened his announced focus by setting the stage for R. Isaac with a general overview of Southern French Jewry and its culture in the thirteenth century.

Third, Saperstein has admirably extended his discussion beyond the limits of strictly intellectual history and demonstrates what the commentaries themselves reveal concerning their historical setting. Isaac's reflections on Jewish courtiers, dignitaries with close connections to the French monarchy who wielded considerable power in the royal administration — like one Astruguet of Beziers to whom Isaac was related by marriage — offer an interesting contrast to the typical dismal picture of relations between Louis IX and the Jews. As opposed to this sort of worthy courtier, Isaac levels bitter criticism against the hereditary office of *nasi*, which empowered its incumbents with authority regardless of their personal merits. Invectives directed at halakhists with no knowledge of philosophy underscore the divisiveness which the issue of rationalism had introduced into the Jewish community. Additional comments attest to the existence of heretics and apostates from within traditional circles, the maintenance of interesting ritual and political practices, and the ongoing polemical exchanges between Jews and Christians which transpired during the high Middle Ages.

Yet in these last attempts to link R. Isaac's comments with events and personages in Christian society, this book is regrettably at its weakest, overstepping the restraints of its usual care and exactitude. The statement that Rashi's understanding of *Birkat ha-Minim*, as referring to idolatrous priests, "may have been the reason why copies of the Talmud were ultimately burned" (p. 189) in the wake

of the Disputation of Paris in 1240 is misguided and overly simplistic, for it misinterprets the relationship between the papal directive to burn the Talmud and the actual disputation, it overestimates the importance of the prayer in the debate, and it overlooks the existence of versions of the prayer (and rabbinic references to *minim*) containing explicit reference to Christians. The suggestion that Isaac may have debated with Pablo Christiani (p. 198) is entirely unsubstantiated and exemplifies the current tendency to attribute (without proof) a plethora of anti-Jewish activities to this intriguing apostate and Dominican friar. The argument from R. Isaac's silence concerning Pablo's debate with Moses Nahmanides in 1263 that Isaac's own disputation with a Christian cleric occurred beforehand is not at all convincing. Boniface VIII — not Boniface VII (pp. 190, 287) — ascended the papal throne in 1295. Nor can the previously quoted typology of reactions to confrontations between sacred literature and new world views be applied (p. 218) to that between the Hebrew Bible and early Christianity without qualification. Assigning to rabbinic Jews the reactionary position and to Church fathers like Origen the allegorist's compromise merely reiterates the theologically motivated and obviously biased schema of Origen himself!

Finally, on a technical note, a bibliography would have noticeably enhanced the utility of this book, owing especially to the author's erudition. Such an addition to the book might also have resolved the problem of the occasional incomplete or misleading citations in the notes — e.g., the references to Ginzberg (p. 217 n. 47), Smalley (*ibid.*, pp. 229 n. 93, 235 n. 76), Husik (p. 241 n. 40), and Grayzel (p. 246 n. 101). In relation to the overall value of this book, however,

none of these shortcomings is of great consequence. *Decoding the Rabbis* deserves recognition for its ingenuity, its precise textual analysis, and its substantial addition to our appreciation of

medieval Jewish ideas and their proponents.

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Anti-Semitism Is Always With Us

From Prejudice to Destruction, Anti-Semitism 1700–1933. By JACOB KATZ. Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press, 1980. 392 pp.

Reviewed by STEVEN LOWENSTEIN

JACOB KATZ, the leading Israeli social historian, has written his new volume on anti-Semitism with the full knowledge that he can illuminate only a portion of that complex, multi-faceted question. He restricts his inquiry, therefore, to one important aspect — the development of the anti-Semitic intellectual tradition during the nineteenth century. Even though the dates in the subtitle (and the photo of Nazis cutting a Jew's beard on the dust jacket) might lead one to expect otherwise, the study has little to say about Nazism. Rather, it concentrates on the difficult and obscure period from the Enlightenment to the revival of anti-Semitism in the 1880s. A further restriction limits the study to Western and Central Europe (France, Germany, Austria and Hungary), the area in which sophisticated "intellectual" anti-semitism developed, while hardly saying a word about the situation in Russia and Rumania where far larger numbers of Jews suffered under more primitive anti-Jewish attitudes. Within these limitations, Katz attempts to give a subtle, but overarching explanation of the historic development of the modern anti-semitic ideology.

Despite the author's reputation as a social historian, this work is essentially an intellectual history

and the bulk of it is devoted to an analysis of the development of the anti-semitic intellectual tradition as represented by the writings of leading thinkers. Among those whose works are discussed are Voltaire, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Michelet, Wagner, Renan, Feuerbach, Bruno Bauer, anti-semitic leaders like Stöcker and Dühring, and lesser lights such as Johann Heinrich Schulz, Friedrich Traugott Hartmann, Karl Grattenauer, Christian Paalzow, Friedrich Rühls, and Jacob Fries. Although social and political forces are not ignored, they tend to serve as background, rather than as the focus of the book. (The sociological, psychological, and philosophical aspects of anti-semitism are not treated at all.) The views of politicians and bureaucrats, the platforms of political parties and occupational associations, shifts in general political alignments, and reports on Jewish-Christian relations on the local level receive less attention than do the well-thought-out positions of ideologues and the seminal works of anti-semites and proto-anti-semites. The essential question which Katz asks is how the European intellectual tradition, which seemed to be moving away from dogmatic Christianity and towards the integration of Jews into general society, could develop a form of Jew-hatred even more virulent than had existed previously.

The main narrative opens with a crucial section called "background," dealing with the two opposing eighteenth century traditions, Christianity and rationalism, which, according to Katz, form the

basis for later anti-semitic ideas. The Christian tradition is represented by Eisenmenger, the scholarly summarizer of the medieval anti-Jewish tradition, while the rationalists are represented by Voltaire and the English Deists. Katz identifies attacks on the Talmud with the Christian tradition still committed to the Old Testament, while those anti-semites not tied to dogmatic Christianity could direct their fire against the Hebrew Bible itself.

Most of *From Prejudice to Destruction* is devoted to an analysis of hostile ideological views on the Jews between 1780 and 1880. The allotment of the major part of the book to those years implies that the major ingredients of the anti-semitic ideology were formed in the period before 1880, which is usually seen as one favorable to the Jews, and that the late nineteenth century saw merely the crystallization of those ideas into a cohesive movement. Some fifty-eight pages are devoted to the anti-semitic movement of the 1880s and 1890s and two brief final chapters, "Racism and the Nazi Climax" and "Anti-Semitism Through the Ages," carry the story up to the present day and give the author's overall conclusions.

Katz shows how the opposing Christian and rationalist views about the Jews each influenced later writers, and how the same anti-Jewish writer could incorporate views from the contradictory traditions. The ideas of Eisenmenger and Voltaire were developed at a time when the "Jewish question" and Emancipation were barely being discussed and before the European Jews changed overwhelmingly and became more integrated into the life of the surrounding peoples. Nevertheless, anti-Jewish writers could quote these earlier thinkers without any regard for the altered Jewish and

general social reality. The effect of each anti-Jewish work or idea was cumulative. Succeeding generations contributed their own arguments and images against the Jews without giving up earlier arguments and ideas. This was possible, according to Katz, because each anti-semitic idea, term or image had virtually a life of its own. Thus, even "men like Stöcker and Dühring, irreconcilably at odds in terms of Christianity" could feel that they were fellow members of the anti-semitic movement, while others "easily combined bits and pieces of ideological elements from whatever provenance as long as they seemed to support their anti-Jewish ideas" (p. 267). For this reason, Katz sees that even anti-Jewish remarks made in works generally favorable to Jewish aspirations were dangerous grist for the anti-semitic mills. Anti-semitic language and slogans were often more durable than the intellectual systems in which they were imbedded.

Katz sees the Christian tradition as the basic source for anti-Jewish feelings in the western world and as a continuing influence even on those who had turned their backs on it. "It was the image of the Jew . . . inherited from Christianity that determined the secular perception of the Jew" (p. 320). Images and emotions from their early upbringing or from generally accepted societal attitudes continued to be harbored even by thinkers who rejected the overt Christian dogmas which had been associated with them. Even such radically anti-religious thinkers as Bruno Bauer, Feuerbach and Dühring retained a higher opinion of Christianity than of Judaism.

Although Katz' prose is never polemical, but always analytic and precise, one detects a note of deep suspicion of Christianity in his work. He expresses surprise that believing Christians could be at-

tracted to Jules Isaac's criticism of Church teachings on Judaism and feels that the "rehabilitation of Judaism within Christianity will remain an esoteric exercise restricted . . . to an intellectual elite." He even describes as "cogent" the anti-Vatican II argument that eradicating anti-Jewish references from Catholic liturgy could "subvert the whole doctrinal edifice of Christianity" (p. 326).

Although, for Katz, Christianity is the chief source of anti-Jewish feeling, this, in itself, does not explain why the anti-semitism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was even more virulent than was medieval prejudice. To find the mechanism for the reemergence of this new violent hatred, we must look, ironically, to the Emancipation process. In the pre-emancipation world, the Jews were an isolated and ignored minority, but the Emancipation, sponsored by emergent European liberalism, changed the picture. "Jews were no longer conceived as standing on the margins of society and the state, but as moving towards the center" (p. 59). The Jewish question was much more central to the life of general society in the late nineteenth century and the fear of a "Jewish takeover" much greater than one hundred years earlier.

The liberals, as the chief architects of the Emancipation, gave an unheard-of new opportunity to European Jews, yet this very policy was based on a negative view of Jewish character. Just as Christians had believed that the conversion of the Jews in the End of Days would finally rid them of their taint, so liberals believed that the Jew would become acceptable, but only through a metamorphosis of his cultural, economic, and social nature which would be brought about by equal opportunity. The Jew would assimilate and cease to be a

social problem. As Katz points out, "the expectation of Jewish assimilation," unlike the future conversion of the Jews, "was open to empirical verification." "If Jewish integration had to be vindicated by observable facts, the conclusion could only be that Jews . . . continued to retain some of their characteristic features" (p. 324). The disappointment with the limited nature of Jewish integration often turned the latent anti-semitism of the liberals into the overt anti-semitism of the 1880s. The number of liberals and ex-liberals cited by Katz as contributors to anti-semitic theory is very large, and includes people like Wagner, Marx, Treitschke, Schönerer and Lueger.

As a corollary to his emphasis on Christianity and reactions to Emancipation as sources for anti-semitism, Katz treats the racial element as less crucial than do most writers on the subject. The racial theory, "was not the cause of the situation, but only its ideational accompaniment" (p. 325); it merely clarified and justified "scientifically" pre-existing prejudices.

Katz' work is a sober analysis of intellectual trends in nineteenth century anti-semitism. He treats the anti-semitic works, distasteful as they may be, with seriousness, never merely dismissing their value or repeating popular charges against them. Thus, though he feels that Eisenmenger's interpretations are distorted, he clears him of falsifying any of his sources, and respects his erudition. He does not denigrate the intellectual stature of the opponents of the Jews; rather, he tries carefully to understand what they meant. However, anti-semitism is no ordinary intellectual subject, certainly not for a Jewish writer. Though meticulous, scholarly study is a virtue, here, as everywhere else, neutrality is not merely impossible, but almost immoral. Katz is able to stick to a dis-

passionate tone, but he makes clear, in his concluding chapter, that "the historian who seeks to assess the question of responsibility cannot content himself with a recital of the facts while withholding moral judgment."

Katz performs an admirable service with his analysis of the changing intellectual attitudes towards Jews, and he does relate these changes to general social and political movements. Nevertheless, these general trends are never analyzed in great depth and always remain secondary to the discussion of intellectual trends. Thus, to some extent, the emergence of anti-semitism is seen in a vacuum. Though the early nineteenth century struggle between liberals and conservatives is given some coverage and reference is made to the depressed economic conditions between 1873 and 1896, little is said about the general crisis of liberalism in the late nineteenth century — one of the most all-encompassing trends of the period. Not only were Jews affected by the racism of the age — so were natives in the newly colonized countries; not only were Jews attacked in the attack on liberalism — so was the whole of laissez-faire economics. The rise of exclusivist nationalisms in the same period also did not affect only Jews. Had Katz dealt more with this general political context he might have put more emphasis on what was new in the anti-semitism of the 1880s, and considered it more a part of the wave of anti-liberal thought. Instead, he seems to lean, even if not explicitly, to a theory (perhaps more popular in Israel than elsewhere) of an eternal hatred towards the Jews, a hatred which changes form but not essence. Anti-semitism is viewed as the inevitable result of the "very presence of the unique Jewish community among the other nations." Katz shows himself to be a

deep pessimist, even more so than the early Zionists who thought that the establishment of a Jewish state would end anti-semitism.

The book is clearly written and could be read by educated laymen as well as scholars, but the argument is made with great subtlety. The individual chapters deal with very specific sub-topics and often involve a fairly close analysis of individual anti-Jewish works. The overall conclusions which Katz arrives at must first be extracted by the reader from the wealth of information that the author brings. It is only in the final chapter that he gives us his conclusions in an explicit manner. Though not always startling in those conclusions, Katz makes a definite contribution in this latest volume. Like all works on the subject, it does not solve all of the difficulties in understanding anti-semitism but perhaps it gives us new insights into one important aspect of the phenomenon.

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Jericho

DONIA CLENMAN

Barren digs.
Then luck
stubborn lady.

A big, rich hole.

23 cities,
23 civilizations,
one on top of another.
An organic whole
touching.
Not much to tell
of bloodshed,
Joshua,
inhumanity,
God's love,
time's wrath.

Only a big, deep hole.

In distant museums
glued potsherds
and learned guides
mumble:
flint, bronze, time,
Baal, Mount, time.

And you trying to picture
real men
in a deep, deep hole.

DONIA CLENMAN *writes short stories, librettos and poetry. Her work has been published extensively in Canada.*

TO THE EDITOR OF JUDAISM

Permit me to make a few comments on the article by Rabbi Philip Sigal which appeared in JUDAISM. I believe it is quite fantastic to presume that anyone would take seriously a formulation of a "renewal" of Halakhic Sabbath observance unless he is convinced that this new formulation has a divine sanction. One who does not believe that Sabbath observance as formulated in the Written and Oral law in all its minutiae is divinely sanctioned may, when convenient, adopt some of Rabbi Sigal's suggestions: when inconvenient, ignore them. To refer to this suggestion as *Halakhah*, or binding law, is a misnomer. So, basically, Rabbi Sigal's efforts in this direction, undoubtedly undertaken with great sincerity, will not attract many converts.

Permit me to point out some inaccuracies in Rabbi Sigal's citations. Anyone who wishes to dispose of the old revelation and proclaim his new one, should try to be a little more precise about his critique of the old. For example, no one has ever stated, to the best of my knowledge, that one may not pick his teeth on the Sabbath. Rabbi Sigal obviously has misunderstood the Mishnah in *Shabbat* 10:6. As an example of the Rabbinic alleviation of some of the stringencies of the Sabbath Halakhah he cites the example of *Melakhah she'enah zerikhah legufah*. This example proves the very reverse. Rabbi Simeon holds this type of activity is permitted *Mi-de-Orayta* (Biblically). Nevertheless, the Rabbis have forbidden it (*Mi-de Rabbanan*) Cf. *Shabbat* 3a. This does not suggest any alleviation. Another of Rabbi Sigal's allusions, sweeping one's house, must also be viewed in the light of the Codes. See e.g., *Arukh Ha-Shulhan* 337, 9.

The passage in Jeremiah 17:21 forbidding carrying or transporting a burden on the Sabbath is addressed to kings and princes. What *a priori* evidence is there that *hoza'ah* or *hakh'nasah*

refer only to commercial activities? How is this apparent from the context in Jeremiah? Cf. R. David Nieto in *Kuzari Sheni*, I, 4-8. Moreover, the Torah text itself refers to the bearing of gifts to the Sanctuary, which did not always consist of heavy objects (see Exodus 35:22), as "*melakhah*". See *ibid.*, 36:6. Cf. Rashi [see, however, RShBM]. Again, by what criterion do we determine what is a "burden" and what is not? Does it have to weigh fifty pounds or ten? How would Rabbi Sigal determine what constitutes a violation of eating forbidden foods or eating on Yom Kippur? Is the reference to a full meal or even a morsel? Obviously, there must be objective criteria to determine these *shiurim*.

"Some of our sages were so perceptive of a new dimension in Sabbath joy that they urged sexual relations every Friday night as well as Sabbath afternoon". So Rabbi Sigal quotes from a number of texts. I don't know where he got this information about Saturday afternoons. Is he unaware of the Talmudic statement (*Niddah* 17a) that Israel is a holy people and Jews do not (except under certain specified conditions) engage in conjugal relations in the daytime?

The dancing which Rabbi Sigal is quoted as saying is prohibited in the Mishnah (*Bezah* 5:2) undoubtedly refers to secular dancing, as is obvious from the context of the Mishnah which differentiates between *shevut* based on secular matters (*reshut*) or religious matters (*mizvah*). There is no evidence of abrogation in the permission of dancing in honor of the Torah.

Rabbi Sigal suggests applying "the matter no longer stands well with the public" as a fruitful criterion of Sabbath Halakhah. How much of the Halakhah will remain if we adopt this principle? The Rabbis in Talmudic time adopted this principle when they were dealing with an observant community. How would this apply at the present time? In

addition, the *inability* of a public to abide by a *Rabbinic ruling* is not the same as a "matter not standing well" in reference to *De-Orayta* rulings.

Rabbi Sigal maintains that the Sabbath is a day on which it is almost imperative that it be utilized to do research and write books and articles for publication. Otherwise when will the scholar have time to do such research? I wonder whether Maimonides wrote his voluminous works on the Sabbath, or Rabbi Moses Cordovero, or Rabbi Kook, or for that matter even Mordecai Kaplan? One who wishes to write books will find plenty time for it. The Sabbath could be well spent in the intensive study conditional for research and writing books or articles.

Rabbi Sigal's suggestions on Sabbath observance are very interesting and might serve as a good introduction to *Shemirat Shabbat*. They have merit for a day intended for physical and psychological recuperation, which might be any day of the week. But why refer to these suggestions as Halakhah? Why not just: "My idea as to how the Sabbath should be observed?" The assumption that the Rabbis throughout the ages have simply played around with the Sabbath and done with it what they wanted is unwarranted and untenable.

Rabbi Sigal's quotation from the late Prof. Boaz Cohen is also imprecise. Prof. Cohen did not state that carrying a key, a handkerchief or umbrella can no longer be viewed as a Sabbath violation but that, even though carrying a handkerchief is prohibited by law, that we will not regard one who does so as a Sabbath breaker (*me'alel Shabbat*). There are many instances in which the feeling of people about certain violations removes the violators from the category of lawbreakers. Dr. Cohen even includes in this category keeping one's business open on the Sabbath as not coinciding with our feeling about Sabbath violations. This itself suggests the volatility of our feelings. Even Rabbi Sigal, as is evident from his paper, will no longer agree with this. Dr. Cohen's statement that Rabbi

Zechariah Frankel permitted carrying an umbrella undoubtedly refers to a place which had an *eruv* (See *Tiferet Israel*, *Kalkelet Shabbat*, pp. 11-13 in *Yakhin U-Boaz* edition).

Milwaukee, Wis.

DAVID S. SHAPIRO

RABBI SIGAL replies:

The basic content of Rabbi Shapiro's opening paragraph requires no refutation. We apparently begin from different premises. I make no pretense at sharing his fundamentalist biblical perspectives or his fundamentalist approach to the so-called "Oral Law." Furthermore, he confuses halakhah and something he calls "binding law." I do not even agree that the historic and authentic halakhah of Judaism, since Sinai, was ever "law." As for the "oral law," *torah shebeal peh*, I see this as *interpretive torah*, teaching that seeks to interpret the written scripture, *torah shebeketav*. Torah is not law, and halakhah is not law. Both are "ways," Torah being guidance, and halakhah the path we follow. That Rabbi Shapiro chooses to deny the term "halakhah" to whatever is not already enshrined in the books he chooses to obey, is his option. My option is to do what the ancient proto-rabbis and rabbis always did, create new halakhah, innovate new practices and liturgy, abolish the obsolete, modify the fossilized, and urge relentlessly that my colleagues join me in both radical surgery and extensive restorative work on our tradition. Indeed I am convinced that my formulation has divine sanction, at least as much divine sanction as that of Judah HaNasi, Moses Maimonides and Joseph Karo. We are all human beings laboring fervently to discover the inner meaning of the Torah and the concealed will of God for our own lives in our own centuries and places of domicile, and for those who look to us. I must here quote the well-known *Rabad* in his vigorous remarks in reference to Maimonides: "I do not know why I should retract from my tradition or my

proofs because of the book by this author. If the one who takes issue with me is greater than I, good; but if I am greater than he, why should I annul my view in favor of his? Furthermore, there are matters concerning which the Geonim disagree with one another, and this compiler has selected the opinion of one and incorporated it into his compilation, and why should I rely upon his selection . . ." (Last note in *Rabad* to Maimonides' Introduction to *Mishneh Torah*). This statement expresses historic halakhic independence and points up that the entire halakhic process is one of selectivity, applicable in all times and places.

I thank Rabbi Shapiro for conceding that my efforts are undertaken with great sincerity. He fears that I will not attract many converts, but I do not seek them. I offer torah to the thirsty.

In reference to Rabbi Shapiro's specific strictures, let me take several:

1) Rabbi Shapiro is correct that there is no prohibition at M. *Shab.* 10:6 "not to pick one's teeth." The original was designed to say, "not to pluck nails with one's teeth."

2) The argument that there is no alleviation *mi-de-Rabbanan* with the principle of *melakhah sheenah zerikhah legufah*, is precise evidence of the distance between us. R. Simon holds what Rabbi Shapiro attributes to him, but not at B. *Shabbat* 3a where Rabbi Shapiro sees an imaginary passage. I am not sure why he connects that passage with *melakhah sheenah*, etc. What we gather at B. *Shab.* 3a is that the third century *'amora*, Samuel, taught that certain actions on the Sabbath for which the doer is *patur* (free of penalty), are nevertheless *'asur* (prohibited), except for three: the capture of a deer, and of a snake, and penetrating an abscess (cf. B. *Shab.* 107a). The principle of *melakhah*, etc. is not stated by Samuel, and is a matter of indifference in the context. But the item certainly points up the two different universes of discourse in which R. Shapiro and I move. For him the *'asur* is all-important. For me the *patur*, and the *exceptions*, are the hopeful aspect in the

halakhah. To argue that something is biblically permitted (*mideoraita*), but is nevertheless rabbinically forbidden (*miderabbanan*), is only to beg the question. If rabbis fifteen-hundred years ago prohibited what the Torah did not prohibit, I hardly see the divine onus upon me to perpetuate their zeal.

3) The above remarks would also apply to R. Shapiro's reference to the question of sweeping one's house. The *Arukh Hashulhan*, even when I agree with it, is not the last word in halakhah. There is no last word in halakhah. It is forever evolving, and we need the intellectual independence of the *Rabad*.

4) On Jer. 17:21, I stand by my reading of the passage. Rabbi Shapiro has a different text. He writes, "The passage . . . is addressed to kings and princes." My text of Jer. 17:20 reads " . . . hear the words of the Lord, kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem who frequent these gates." It is furthermore clear from vv 21-22 that commerce is referred to with the word *mas'a*, a load, a major weight (Num. 4:24), a term logically applicable to transporting commercially. Ex. 35:22 says nothing about *melakhah*, and it and 36:6 are irrelevant to Jer. 17:20 f. In any case, R. Shapiro shatters his own argument by calling attention to *Rashbam* on 36:6 who clearly does not apply the word *melakhah* there to carrying. For me the question of *mas'a* is not one of weight but of purpose. A 100 pound weight, my personal baggage, can be carried; a tiny phonograph needle should not be shipped commercially. I ask only that R. Shapiro ponder my thesis carefully and not confuse the issue. To raise analogies with how much *treife* food violates *kashruth*, and how much food desecrates the Yom Kippur fast is to miss my argument completely.

It would be impossible to continue a counter-critique of each detail raised by Rabbi Shapiro. What is clear is that we come to the general question of halakhah from entirely different postures. For Rabbi Shapiro, "the halakhah" is what is written in a few

chosen, accredited books; for me, "the halakhah" is a historic system embodied in a massive literature from which I have the historic, halakhah-given right to select what I follow.

Rabbi Shapiro tends to make dogmatic statements designed to convince a reader that he speaks more authentically halakhically. He therefore chooses to question here and there whether I am "unaware," or where I "got this information." I prefer to go to the texts as I did above (Jer. 17), and I will therefore turn now to Mishnah *Bezah* 5:2. Rabbi Shapiro writes, "The dancing which Rabbi Sigal is quoted as saying is prohibited in the Mishnah (Betzaḥ 5:2) undoubtedly refers to secular dancing, as is obvious from the context of the Mishnah . . ." The Mishnah says nothing about "secular dancing," but that there are certain things that are *sheḥut* which should not be done on Yom Tob as they are not done on Shabbat, and one of them is dancing. Does Rabbi Shapiro, in that case, mean to imply that just as "religious dancing would be permitted, riding for "religious" reasons (to the synagogues, hospitals, at least on animals) would also be permitted? And how did the *gemara* understand it? Obviously *no dancing* at all was understood, without distinction between "secular" and "religious" dancing, "lest one repair musical instruments." If Rabbi Shapiro seriously considers that "religious" dancing was permitted, are we to assume it is permitted to repair musical instruments for religious dancing? Obviously Rabbi Shapiro would not agree to that inference. And I think it is therefore important to bring this particular matter to a conclusion by pointing out that Rabbi Shapiro failed altogether to understand the context of *sheḥut*, *reshut*, *mizvah* in that pericope. From my reading of his letter, he interprets the Mishnah almost homiletically to refer to *sheḥut* on two levels: secular and religious, *reshut* and *mizvah*. This is not a correct reading of the Mishnah. The Mishnah refers clearly to three categories of activities: *sheḥut*, general activities; *reshut*,

matters related to administrative social agencies requiring documents; and *mizvah*, matters which have the coloring of *mizvah* by their nature, but really involve business-like transactions. The *gemara* makes it clear (B. Bez. 37a) that the Mishnah proceeds to a crescendo from *sheḥut* to *reshut* to *mizvah*.

The question is not whether one can write voluminous works without writing on the Sabbath, or preserve good research files of serious study without annotations on the Sabbath. The question is whether *this is forbidden*. Rabbi Shapiro does not address himself to it. He wishes to defend and rationalize his inherited halakhah. When he says "The Sabbath could be well spent in the intensive study conditional for research and writing books and articles" he only begs the question. May the student take notes, or must he search endlessly on Sunday again for the references that have slipped his mind?

Finally, one thing I am always sensitive to is whether I quote my teachers precisely, and Rabbi Shapiro says my "quotation from the late Prof. Boaz Cohen is also imprecise." First of all, I did not quote Prof. Cohen; I interpreted him. To quote now, "We will not consider one who carries a watch, a handkerchief, a key or a cane as a Sabbath breaker." This is precisely what I said in his name: that these acts "can hardly any longer be viewed as Sabbath violation." Prof. Cohen was perfectly happy to allow these *ʾisurim* to fall into disuse. I argue that as long as we do not formally proclaim an act *mutar*, if it is *ʾasur* on the books, it must be *ʾasur*. I am appealing for intellectual, or more precisely, halakhic integrity. Am I to infer from the crowded parking lots of Orthodox synagogues on the Sabbath that an Orthodox rabbi, in Cohen-like liberalism, would no longer view riding as a forbidden act? Is Rabbi Shapiro willing to grant that "feelings" have changed, and that this "removes the violators from the category of law-breakers?" If so, Rabbi Shapiro and I are on the verge of real dialogue.

Grand Rapids, Mich.

PHILLIP SIGAL

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